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Herbert Fingarette

Second Thoughts About Gun Control — *James D. Wright*

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Alcoholism: the mythical disease

HERBERT FINGARETTE

THE IDEA that alcoholism is a disease is a myth, and a harmful myth at that. The phrase itself —"alcoholism is a disease"—is a slogan. It lacks definite medical meaning and therefore precludes one from taking any scientific attitude toward it, pro or con. But the slogan has political potency. And it is associated in the public consciousness with a number of beliefs about heavy drinking that do have meaning, and do have important consequences for the treatment of individuals and for social policy. These beliefs lack a scientific foundation; most have been decisively refuted by the scientific evidence.

This assertion obviously conflicts with the barrage of pronouncements in support of alcoholism's classification as a disease by health professionals and organizations such as the American Medical Association, by the explosively proliferating treatment programs, and by innumerable public-service organizations. So it may seem that a sweeping challenge to the disease concept can only be hyperbole, the sensationalist exaggeration of a few partial truths and a few minor doubts.

To the contrary: the public has been profoundly misled, and is still being actively misled. Credulous media articles have featured so many dramatic human-interest anecdotes by "recovering alcohol-

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ics," so many "scientific" pronouncements about medical opinion and new discoveries, that it is no wonder the lay public responds with trusting belief.

Yet this much is unambiguous and incontrovertible: the public has been kept unaware of a mass of scientific evidence accumulated over the past couple of decades, evidence familiar to researchers in the field, which radically challenges each major belief generally associated in the public mind with the phrase, "alcoholism is a disease." I refer not to isolated experiments or off-beat theories but to massive, accumulated, mainstream scientific work by leading authorities, published in recognized journals. If the barrage of "public service" announcements leaves the public wholly unaware of this contrary evidence, shouldn't this in itself raise grave questions about the credibility of those who assure the public that alcoholism has now been scientifically demonstrated to be a disease?

One may wonder why it is important whether or not alcoholism is a disease. To begin with, "disease" is the word that triggers provision of health-insurance payments, employment benefits such as paid leave and workmen's compensation, and other government benefits. The direct cost of treatment for the "disease" of alcoholism is rapidly rising, already exceeding a billion dollars annually. Add in all related health costs and other kinds of benefits, and the dollar figure is well into the tens of billions annually. Alcoholism is, of course, profoundly harmful, both to the drinkers themselves and to others. But if it ceased to be characterized as a disease, all the disease-oriented methods of treatment and resulting expenditures would be threatened; this in turn would threaten the material interests of hundreds of thousands of alcoholics and treatment staffers who receive these billions in funds. The other side of the coin would be many billions in savings for taxpayers and those who pay insurance premiums.

It is not surprising that the disease concept of alcoholism is now vigorously promoted by a vast network of lobbies, national and local, professional and volunteer, ranging from the most prestigious medical associations to the most crassly commercial private, profit-making providers of treatment. This is big politics and big business.

Use of the word "disease" also shapes the values and attitudes of society. The selling of the disease concept of alcoholism has led courts, legislatures, and the populace generally to view damage caused by heavy drinkers as a product of "the disease and not the drinker." The public remains ambivalent about this, and the criminal law continues to resist excusing alcoholics for criminal acts. But

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the pressure is there, and, of more practical importance, the civil law has largely given in. Civil law now often mandates leniency or complete absolution for the alcoholic from the rules, regulations, and moral norms to which non-diseased persons are held legally or morally accountable. Such is the thrust of a current appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court by two veterans, who are claiming certain benefits in spite of their having failed to apply for them at any time during the legally specified ten-year period after discharge from the army. Their excuse: alcoholism, and the claim that their persistent heavy drinking was a disease entitling them to exemption from the regulations. The Court's decision could be a bellwether.

What seems compassion when done in the name of "disease" turns out, when the facts are confronted, to subvert the drinker's autonomy and will to change, and to exacerbate a serious social problem. This is because the excuses and benefits offered heavy drinkers work psychologically as incentives to continue drinking. The doctrine that the alcoholic is "helpless" delivers the message that he might as well drink, since he lacks the ability to refrain. As for the expensive treatments, they do no real good. Certainly our current disease-oriented policies have not reduced the scale of the problem; in fact, the number of chronic heavy drinkers reported keeps rising. (It is currently somewhere in the range of ten to twenty million, depending on the definitions one uses.)

In the remainder of this discussion I will set out the major beliefs associated with the disease concept of alcoholism, and then summarize the actual evidence on each issue. I will also sketch an alternative perspective on chronic heavy drinking that is warranted by the evidence we have today.

Conventional wisdom

Science, according to the conventional view, has established that there is a specific disease that is triggered by drinking alcoholic beverages. Not everyone is susceptible; most people are not. But (the argument continues) a significant minority of the population has a distinctive biological vulnerability, an "allergy" to alcohol. For these people, to start drinking is to start down a fatal road. The stages are well defined and develop in regular order, as with any disease, with the symptoms accumulating and becoming increasingly disabling and demoralizing. First comes what looks like normal social drinking, but then, insidiously and inevitably, come heavier and more frequent drinking, drunken bouts, secret drinking, morning drinking, and, after a while, "blackouts" of memory from the

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night before. It begins to take more and more liquor to get the same effect—physical "tolerance" develops—and any attempt to stop drinking brings on the unbearable and potentially life-threatening "withdrawal" symptoms. Eventually, the crucial symptom develops: "loss of control." At that point, whenever the person takes a drink, the alcohol automatically triggers an inability to control the drinking, and drunken bouts become the rule. There follows an inevitable, deepening slavery to alcohol, which wrecks social life, brings ruin, and culminates in death. The only escape—according to this elaborate myth—is appropriate medical treatment for the disease.

The myth offers the false hope that as a result of recent "breakthroughs" in science we now basically understand what causes the disease—a genetic and neurophysiological defect. But fortunately, it is claimed, medical treatment is available, and generally produces excellent results. However, the argument continues, even after successful treatment the alcoholic can never drink again. The "allergy" is never cured; the disease is in remission, but the danger remains. The lifelong truth for the alcoholic is, as the saying goes, "one drink—one drunk." The possibility of a normal life depends on complete abstinence from alcohol. There are no "cured" alcoholics, only "recovering" ones.

That is the classical disease concept of alcoholism. As I have said, just about every statement in it is either known to be false or (at a minimum) lacks scientific foundation.

Origins of the myth

Before turning to the substance of the specific claims, it helps to be aware of the historical context. For it is important to recognize that the disease concept of alcoholism not only has no basis in current science; it has *never* had a scientific justification.

The understanding of alcoholism as a disease first surfaced in the early nineteenth century. The growing popularity of materialistic and mechanistic views bolstered the doctrine that drinking problems stemmed from a simple malfunctioning of the bodily machinery. The new idea was popularized by Benjamin Rush, one of the leading medical theorists of the day.

Rush's claim was ideological, not scientific, since neither Rush nor anyone else at that time had the experimental facilities or the biological knowledge to justify it. It seemed plausible because of its compatibility with the crude biological theories of the time, assumptions that we now know to be erroneous. Nevertheless, the idea seized the public imagination, in part because it appealed to

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the growing mercantile and manufacturing classes, whose demand for a disciplining "work ethic" (especially among the working class) was supported by this new "scientific" indictment of drinking. We should realize that the nineteenth-century version of the doctrine, as advanced by the politically powerful temperance movement, indicted *all* drinking. Alcohol (like heroin today) was viewed as inherently addictive. The drinker's personal characteristics and situation were considered irrelevant.

The nineteenth-century temperance movement crested in 1919 with the enactment of the Prohibition Amendment; but by 1933 the idea of total prohibition had lost credibility, and the amendment was repealed. For one thing, the public no longer accepted the idea that no one at all could drink alcohol safely. In addition, the costs of prohibition—such as gangsterism and public cynicism about the law—had become too high. Most people wanted to do openly and legally, in a civilized way, what large numbers of people had been doing surreptitiously.

For the temperance impulse to survive, it had to be updated in a way that did not stigmatize all drinking on moral or medical grounds. Any new anti-alcohol movement had to be more selective in its target, by taking into account the desires of drinkers generally, as well as the interests of the now legal (and growing) alcoholic beverage industry.

A new sect arose with just the right formula. Alcoholics Anonymous, founded in 1935, taught that alcohol was not the villain in and of itself, and that most people could drink safely. (In this way the great majority of drinkers and the beverage industry were mollified.) A minority of potential drinkers, however, were said to have a peculiar biological vulnerability; these unfortunates, it was held, are "allergic" to alcohol, so that their drinking activates the disease, which then proceeds insidiously along the lines outlined earlier.

This contemporary version of the disease theory of alcoholism, along with subsequent minor variants of the theory, is often referred to now as the "classic" disease concept of alcoholism. Like the temperance doctrine, the new doctrine was not based on any scientific research or discovery. It was created by the two ex-alcoholics who founded A.A.: William Wilson, a New York stockbroker, and Robert Holbrook Smith, a physician from Akron, Ohio. Their ideas in turn were inspired by the Oxford religious movement, and by the ideas of another physician, William Silkworth. They attracted a small following, and a few sympathetic magazine articles helped the movement grow.

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Alcoholism and science

What A.A. still needed was something that would serve as a scientific authority for its tenets. After all, the point of speaking of a "disease" was to suggest science, medicine, and an objective malfunction of the body. The classic disease theory of alcoholism was given just such an apparent scientific confirmation in 1946. A respected scientist, E.M. Jellinek, published a lengthy scientific article, consisting of eighty-plus pages impressively filled with charts and figures. He carefully defined what he called the "phases of alcoholism," which went in a regular pattern, from apparently innocent social drinking ever downward to doom. The portrait, overall and in its detail, largely mirrored the A.A. portrait of the alcoholic. Jellinek's work and A.A. proselytizing generated an unfaltering momentum; the disease concept that they promulgated has never been publicly supplanted by the prosaic truth.

Jellinek's portrait of the "phases of alcoholism" was not an independent scientific confirmation of A.A. doctrine. For as Jellinek explicitly stated, his data derived entirely from a sampling of A.A. members, a small fraction of whom had answered and mailed back a questionnaire that had appeared in the A.A. newsletter. The questionnaire was prepared by A.A. members, not by Jellinek; Jellinek himself criticized it, finding it scientifically inadequate. In addition, many A.A. members did not even subscribe to the newsletter, and so had no opportunity to respond. Jellinek obtained only 158 questionnaires, but for various reasons could actually use just 98 of them. This was a grossly inadequate set of data, of course, but it was all Jellinek had to work with.

Predictably, the data from these ninety-eight questionnaires generated a portrait of alcoholism that coincided with the A.A. portrait. Since Jellinek was a reputable scientist, it is not surprising that he pointed to the various limitations of the data base and the highly tentative nature of his conclusions. It is equally unsurprising that A.A. propagandists publicized the impressively charted and statistically annotated portrait drawn by Jellinek, but glossed over his scholarly reservations about the hypotheses and data.

The "alcoholism movement," as it has come to be called among those familiar with the facts, has grown at an accelerating rate. Its growth results from the cumulative effect of the great number of drinkers indoctrinated by A.A., people who passionately identify themselves with the A.A. portrait of "the alcoholic." A.A. has vigorously supported the idea of "treatment" for alcoholics; in turn, the

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rapidly proliferating "treatment" centers for the "disease of alcoholism" have generally supported A.A. All this has generated a kind of snowballing effect.

By the 1970s there were powerful lobbying organizations in place at all levels of government. The National Council on Alcoholism (NCA), for example, which has propagated the disease concept of alcoholism, has been a major national umbrella group from the early days of the movement. Until 1982 the NCA was subsidized by the liquor industry, which had several representatives on its board. The alliance was a natural one: at the cost of conceding that a small segment of the population is allergic to alcohol and ought not to drink, the liquor industry gained a freer hand with which to appeal to the majority of people, who are ostensibly not allergic.

Health professionals further widened the net, and economic incentives came powerfully into play. Federal and local governments began to open their health budgets to providers of alcoholism treatment, and also to alcoholism researchers. Insurance companies are increasingly required to do the same. Today, treatment aimed at getting alcoholics to stop drinking brings in over a billion dollars a year. Alcoholism researchers now rely on what is probably the second largest funding source after defense—government health funds. And by now there are hundreds of thousands of former heavy drinkers who feel an intense emotional commitment; they supply a large proportion of the staffs of treatment centers.

Large and powerful health-professional organizations (such as the American Medical Association) now have internal constituencies whose professional power and wealth derive from their role as the authorities responsible for dealing with the "disease" of alcoholism. As usual, these interest constituencies lobby internally, and the larger organization is persuaded to take an official stand in favor of the meaningless slogan, "alcoholism is a disease." Thus there are many health organizations that now endorse this slogan.

Judges, legislators, and bureaucrats all have a stake in the doctrine. They can now with clear consciences get the intractable social problems posed by heavy drinkers off their agenda by compelling or persuading these unmanageable people to go elsewhere—that is, to get "treatment." Why should these public officials mistrust—or want to mistrust—this safe-as-motherhood way of getting troublesome problems off their backs while winning popular approval? The ample evidence that these "treatment" programs are ineffective, and waste considerable amounts of money and resources, is ignored.

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The "phases of alcoholism"

The "phases-of-alcoholism" portrait of the alcoholic has been examined in detail in a number of major studies dating back to the 1960s. A recent summary of the scientific literature on this topic indicates that the typical drinking pattern is characterized by much fluctuating between levels of consumption. Thus, many drinkers with numerous and severe problems are found later to have markedly improved, or to have developed different problems. Some also deteriorate. Individual drinkers do not develop in any consistent pattern, nor do they remain stable in a single pattern. Some claim "loss of control"; others do not. Many report no social problems associated with their drinking (and so, not surprisingly, many heavy drinkers are not recognized as such by friends, colleagues, or even family).

One of the leading scientists in the field, Marc Schuckit, summarizes the evidence as to whether alcoholics drink persistently by pointing out that "in any given month, one half of alcoholics will be abstinent, with a mean of four months of being dry in any one-year to two-year period." In general, as George Vaillant has reported, the cumulative evidence is that during any reasonably long period (ten to twenty years), roughly one-third of alcoholics "mature out" into various forms of moderate drinking or abstinence. The rate of "maturing out" for heavy problem drinkers—including those not diagnosed as alcoholics—is substantially higher.

A number of factors are associated with rates of "natural" improvement (i.e., improvement independent of any formal treatment): higher socioeconomic class, greater education, regular employment, and being married are positively associated with higher improvement rates. Those who "mature out" at lower than average rates tend to be socially deprived and alienated. "None of this", says one specialist on the topic, "fits with the disease model of alcoholism insofar as that model implies keeping early symptoms and early problems and adding others as time passes." Certainly none of this fits with the concept of a disease whose pattern of development is uniform, and essentially independent of individual social and cultural characteristics.

Biological causes?

What does it mean to say that alcoholism is a disease? In public discussions in the news media, it is usually taken to mean that alcoholism has a single biological cause. "I believe [alcoholics] have a

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genetic predisposition and a certain kind of biochemistry that dooms you to be an alcoholic if you use alcohol." This is a characteristic remark, with what in this domain is a familiar kind of specious authority. The statement was printed in an alcoholism bulletin issued under the aegis of a University of California Extension Division Alcoholism Program. It appears in an interview with Kevin Bellows, a lay activist heading an international organization fighting alcoholism.

Lay activists are not alone in pressing this theme. When I was on a network talk-show recently, the physician on the panel—a man high in government alcoholism advisory councils—devoted most of his time to running through a list of recent research discoveries about the biological peculiarities of alcoholics. His thesis was that alcoholism is unquestionably a disease, and he plainly implied that it has a biological cause. What the lay audience does not realize is that the newly discovered biological phenomena can rarely be regarded as *causes* of chronic heavy drinking; instead, they are merely *associated* with chronic heavy drinking, or with intoxication. Nevertheless, the audience is led to infer that they play a causal role; in fact, we know that there are *no* decisive physical causes of alcoholism.

Long-term heavy drinking is undoubtedly an important contributing cause of bodily ailments—including major organ, nerve, circulatory, and tissue disorders. The illness and mortality rates of heavy drinkers are far higher than those of the population generally. Chronic heavy drinking is rivalled only by habitual smoking as a major contributor to the nation's hospital and morgue populations. But all this is the *effect* of drinking; the drinking behavior itself is the cause. Stop the behavior and you stop its terrible physical effects.

Another abnormal physical condition associated with heavy drinking is the appearance of biological "markers." These metabolic and other physiological conditions—statistically abnormal but not necessarily ailments in and of themselves—may often be present among alcoholics. More significantly, some of them are present in persons who are not and have not been alcoholics, but who have been identified on independent grounds as being at higher-than-average risk of eventually becoming alcoholics. Such "markers" can serve as warning signs for those at higher risk. It has been hypothesized that some of these biological "markers" may play a causal role in bringing about alcoholic patterns of drinking. The question is: What kind and what degree of causality are at issue?

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One much discussed metabolic "marker" is the difference in the way those who are independently identified as being at higher risk oxidize alcohol into acetaldehyde and in turn metabolize the acetaldehyde. The toxic effects of acetaldehyde in the brain have led to speculation that it might play a key causal role in inducing alcoholism. Analogous claims have been made about the higher level of morphine-like substances that alcoholics secrete when they metabolize alcohol. As it happens (so often in these matters), there are serious difficulties in measuring acetaldehyde accurately, and the reported results remain inadequately confirmed. But these confirmation problems are problems of technique, and not of fundamental importance.

The substantive point, generally obscured by the excitement of new discovery, is that even if the existence of any such metabolic processes were confirmed, they still would not cause alcoholic behavior, because the metabolism of alcohol takes place only when there is alcohol in the body. Therefore, these metabolic products cannot be present in alcoholics who have not been drinking for a period of time, and in whom the total metabolic process in question is not presently taking place. Yet by definition, these individuals return to drinking and do so recurrently, in spite of the intermittent periods of sobriety. The metabolic phenomena bear only on drinking that is done while in a state of intoxication; the key question about alcoholism, however, is why a sober person, with no significant toxic product remaining in the body, should resume drinking when it is known to have such harmful effects.

The story of biological discoveries concerning alcoholism is always the same: many unconfirmed results are unearthed, but no causal link to repetitive drinking is ever established. There is one exception, however: the recent discoveries in genetics. A study of these, and of how they have been reported to the public, is revealing.

Alcoholism and genes

Several excellently designed genetic studies of alcoholism have recently come up with credible positive results; thus we have been hearing from activists, treatment-center staff members, and physicians that "alcoholism is a genetic disease." The reality—as revealed by the data—is very different from what this slogan suggests.

The course followed in these recent "decisive" studies has been simple: find children who were born of an alcoholic mother or father, who were put up for adoption very shortly after birth, and who thus spent little time with their biological parents. Then see whether

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this group of children shows a higher rate of alcoholism in later life than a comparable group of adoptees whose biological parents were not alcoholics. Controlling all other relevant conditions so that they are the same for both groups, one can infer that any eventual differences in the group rates of alcoholism is attributable to their heredity, the one respect in which they differ. In all these studies, the prevalence of alcoholism was significantly greater among the biological sons of alcoholics, especially the sons of alcoholic fathers. Doesn't this suggest that alcoholism is hereditary?

To answer this question, let us consider the first of these reports, a 1973 article by Donald Goodwin and his colleagues. They concluded that about 18 percent of the biological sons of an alcoholic parent themselves became alcoholics, whereas only 5 percent of the biological sons of non-alcoholic parents became alcoholics—a statistically significant ratio of almost four to one, which in all probability is ascribable to heredity. This is what we typically hear about in the media, with or without the precise numbers.

Now let's look at the same data from a different angle, and in a more meaningful context. As simple arithmetic tells us, if 18 percent of the sons of alcoholics do become alcoholics, then 82 percent—more than four out of five—do *not*. Thus, to generalize from the Goodwin data, we can say that the odds are very high—better than four to one—that the son born of an alcoholic parent will *not* become an alcoholic. Put differently, it is utterly false, and perniciously misleading, to tell people with a parental background of alcoholism that their heredity "dooms" them to become alcoholics, or even that their heredity makes it probable that they will become alcoholics. Quite the contrary. Their alcoholic heredity does make it more probable that they'll become alcoholics than if they had non-alcoholic parents, but the probability is still low. This is to say that life circumstances are far more important than genes in determining how many people in any group will become heavy drinkers.

There is yet another important implication: since 5 percent of the sons of non-alcoholic parents become alcoholics, and since there are far more non-alcoholic parents than alcoholic ones, that 5 percent ends up representing a far larger total number of alcoholic sons. This is consistent with what we know anyway—the great majority of alcoholics do not have alcoholic parents.

The most recent (and influential) adoptee genetic study, reported by Cloninger and his colleagues, concludes with these words: "The demonstration of the critical importance of sociocultural influences in most alcoholics suggests that major changes in social attitudes

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about drinking styles can change dramatically the prevalence of alcohol abuse regardless of genetic predisposition."

Given the possibly dramatic effect of social attitudes and beliefs, the media emphasis on genes as the cause of alcoholism has a pernicious, though unremarked, effect. As we have noted, only a minority of alcoholics have an alcoholic parent. Emphasis on heredity as the "cause" of alcoholism may give a false sense of assurance to the far greater number of people who are in fact in danger of becoming alcoholics, but who do not have an alcoholic parent. These potential alcoholics may feel free to drink heavily, believing themselves genetically immune to the "disease."

The Special Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatry put the matter in perspective by saying the following in its book-length statement on alcoholism: "It is common to find that some genetic contribution can be established for many aspects of human attributes or disorders (ranging from musical ability to duodenal ulcers), and drinking is unlikely to be the exception."

Causes of alcoholism

There is a consensus among scientists that no single cause of alcoholism, biological or otherwise, has ever been scientifically established. There are many causal factors, and they vary from drinking pattern to drinking pattern, from drinker to drinker. We already know many of the predominant influences that evoke or shape patterns of drinking. We know that family environment plays a role, as does age. Ethnic and cultural values are also important: the Irish, Scandinavians, and Russians tend to be heavy drinkers; Jews do not. The French traditionally drank modest amounts at one sitting, but drank more regularly over the course of the day. Cultural norms have changed in France in recent decades and so have drinking styles.

We have interesting anthropological reports about the introduction of European styles of drinking into non-European tribal societies. Among the Chichicastenango Indians of Guatemala, for example, there are two different ways of drinking heavily. When drinking ceremonially, in the traditional way, men retain their dignity and fulfill their ceremonial duties even if they have drunk so much that they cannot walk unassisted. When they drink in the bars and taverns where secular and European values and culture hold sway, the men dance, weep, quarrel, and act promiscuously.

The immediate social setting and its cultural meaning are obviously important in our own society. The amount and style of

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drinking typically vary according to whether the drinker is in a bar, at a formal dinner party, a post-game party, or an employee get-together. It is known that situations of frustration or tension, and the desire for excitement, pleasure, or release from feelings of fatigue or social inhibitions, often lead people to drink. Much depends on what the individual has "learned" from the culture about the supposed effects of alcohol, and whether the person desires those particular effects at a particular moment.

But does any of this apply to alcoholics? The belief in a unique disease of alcoholism leads many to wonder whether the sorts of influences mentioned above can make much of a difference when it comes to the supposedly "overwhelming craving" of alcoholics. Once one realizes that there is no distinct group of "diseased" drinkers, however, one is less surprised to learn that no group of drinkers is immune to such influences or is vulnerable only to other influences.

Do alcoholics lack control?

In fact, alcoholics do have substantial control over their drinking, and they do respond to circumstances. Contrary to what the public has been led to believe, this is not disputed by experts. Many studies have described conditions under which diagnosed alcoholics will drink moderately or excessively, or will choose not to drink at all. Far from being driven by an overwhelming "craving," they turn out to be responsive to common incentives and disincentives, to appeals and arguments, to rules and regulations. Alcohol does not automatically trigger uncontrolled drinking. Resisting our usual appeals and ignoring reasons we consider forceful are not results of alcohol's chemical effect but of the fact that the heavy drinker has different values, fears, and strategies. Thus, in their usual settings alcoholics behave without concern for what others regard as rational considerations.

But when alcoholics in treatment in a hospital setting, for example, are told that they are not to drink, they typically follow the rule. In some studies they have been informed that alcoholic beverages are available, but that they should abstain. Having decided to cooperate, they voluntarily refrain from drinking. More significantly, it has been reported that the occasional few who cheated nevertheless did not drink to excess but voluntarily limited themselves to a drink or two in order to keep their rule violation from being detected. In short, when what they value is at stake, alcoholics control their drinking accordingly.

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Alcoholics have been tested in situations in which they can perform light but boring work to "earn" liquor; their preference is to avoid the boring activity and forgo the additional drinking. When promised money if they drink only moderately, they drink moderately enough to earn the money. When threatened with denial of social privileges if they drink more than a certain amount, they drink moderately, as directed. The list of such experiments is extensive. The conclusions are easily confirmed by carefully observing one's own heavy-drinking acquaintances, provided one ignores the stereotype of "the alcoholic."

Some people object that these experiments take place in "protected" settings and are therefore invalid. This gets things backwards. The point is that it is precisely settings, circumstances, and motivations that are the crucial influences on how alcoholics choose to drink. The alcohol per se—either its availability or its actual presence in the person's system—is not decisive.

Indeed, the alcohol per se or its ready availability seems to be irrelevant to how the alcoholic drinks. Among the most persuasive experiments demonstrating the irrelevance of alcohol to the alcoholic's drinking are several studies in which alcoholic subjects were deceived about whether they were drinking an alcoholic or nonalcoholic beverage. Alan Marlatt and his colleagues, for example, asked a group of alcoholics to help them "taste-rate" three different brands of the same beverage. Each individual subject was installed in a private room with three large pitchers of beverage, each pitcher supposedly containing a different brand of the same beverage. Their task, of course, was phony. Unknown to them, the subjects had been assigned to one of four groups. One group was told that the beverage in the three pitchers was tonic water—which was true. But a second group was told that the beverage was a tonic-and-vodka mix—though in fact it, too, was pure tonic water. Those in the third group were told that the beverage was tonic-and-vodka—which in fact it was. Those in the fourth group were told that it was simply tonic water—whereas in fact it too was tonic-and-vodka. The subjects were left alone (actually observed through a one-way window) and allowed to "taste" the drinks at will, which they did. The total amount drunk and the rapidity of sips were secretly recorded.

The results of this study (and several similar ones) were illuminating. First, none of the alcoholic subjects drank all the beverage —even though, according to the disease theory, those who were actually drinking vodka ought to have proceeded to drink uncontrol-

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lably. Second, all of those who believed they were drinking vodka—whether they really were or had been deceived—drank more and faster. Conversely, all of those who believed they were drinking pure tonic—though some were actually drinking vodka—drank less and more slowly. The inference is unambiguous: the actual presence or absence of alcohol in the system made no difference in the drinking pattern; what the alcoholics *believed* was in the beverage did make a difference—in fact, all the difference.

These results fit into a more general pattern revealed by similar experiments on other aspects of alcohol-related behavior in both alcoholics and non-alcoholics: change the beliefs about the presence of alcohol (or the effect it is supposed to have), and the behavior changes. But the alcohol itself plays no measurable role.

Mark Keller, one of the early leaders of the alcoholism movement, has responded to such evidence by redefining (or as he would say, "reexplaining") the key concept of "loss of control." We are now told that this concept never connoted an automatically induced inability to stop drinking. Like other sophisticated advocates of the disease concept, Keller now means that one "can't be sure." The alcoholic who has resolved to stop drinking may or may not stand by his resolution. We are told that "loss of control" is compatible, though unpredictably, with temporary, long-term, or indefinite remission. Here medical terms such as "remission" provide a facade of scientific expertise, but the substance of what we are told is that "loss of control" is consistent with just about anything. This precludes prediction, and of course explains nothing. If it retains any empirical content at all, it amounts to a platitude: someone who for years has relied on a certain way of handling life's stresses may resolve to change, but he or she "can't be sure" whether that promise will be fully kept. This is reasonable. But it is not a scientific explanation of an inner process that causes drinking.

Similarly, the idea that "craving" causes the alcoholic to drink uncontrollably has been tacitly modified. It was plausible in its original sense, which is still the popular understanding: an inordinately powerful, "overwhelming," and "irresistible" desire. But the current experimental work regards "mild craving" as a form of "craving." Of course the whole point of "craving" as an explanation of a supposed irresistible compulsion to drink is abandoned here. But the *word* is retained—and the public is misled.

There have been other adjustments in response to new evidence, designed to retain the "disease" terminology at whatever cost. We now read that "of course alcoholism is an illness that consists of not

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just one but many diseases, having different forms and causes." We also hear—in pronouncements addressed to more knowledgeable audiences—that alcoholism is a disease with biological, psychological, social, cultural, economic, and even spiritual dimensions, all of them important. This is a startling amplification of the meaning of "disease," to the point where it can refer to *any* human problem. It is an important step toward expanding the medicalization of human problems—a trend that has been deservedly criticized in recent years.

A useful lie?

Even if the disease concept lacks a scientific foundation, mightn't it nevertheless be a useful social "white lie," since it causes alcoholics to enter treatment? This common—and plausible—argument suffers from two fatal flaws.

First, it disregards the effects of this doctrine on the large number of heavy drinkers who do not plan to enter treatment. Many of these heavy drinkers see themselves (often correctly) as not fitting the criteria of "alcoholism" under some current diagnostic formula. The inference they draw is that they are therefore not ill, and thus have no cause for concern. Their inclination to deny their problems is thus encouraged. This can be disastrous, since persistent heavy drinking is physically, mentally, and often socially destructive.

Furthermore, since most people diagnosable as alcoholics today do not enter treatment, the disease concept insidiously provides an incentive to keep drinking heavily. For those many alcoholics who do not enter treatment and who (by definition) want very much to have a drink, the disease doctrine assures them that they might as well do so, since an effort to refrain is doomed anyway.

Moreover, a major implication of the disease concept, and a motive for promoting it, is that what is labeled "disease" is held to be excusable because involuntary. Special benefits are provided alcoholics in employment, health, and civil-rights law. The motivation behind this may be humane and compassionate, but what it does functionally is to reward people who continue to drink heavily. This is insidious: the only known way to have the drinker stop drinking is to establish circumstances that provide a motivation to stop drinking, not an excuse to continue. The U.S. Supreme Court currently faces this issue in two cases before it. And the criminal courts have thus far resisted excusing alcoholics from criminal responsibility for their misconduct. But it's difficult to hold this line when the AMA insists the misconduct is involuntary.

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The second flaw in the social "white lie" argument is the mistaken assumption that use of the word "disease" leads alcoholics to seek a medical treatment that works. In fact, medical treatment for alcoholism is ineffective. Medical authority has been abused for the purpose of enlisting public faith in a useless treatment for which Americans have paid more than a billion dollars. To understand why the treatment does no good, we should recall that many different kinds of studies of alcoholics have shown substantial rates of so-called "natural" improvement. As a 1986 report concludes, "the vast majority of [addicted] persons who change do so on their own." This "natural" rate of improvement, which varies according to class, age, socioeconomic status, and certain other psychological and social variables, lends credibility to the claims of success made by programs that "treat" the "disease" of alcoholism.

Many of the clients—and, in the expensive programs, almost all of the clients—are middle-class, middle-aged people, who are intensely motivated to change, and whose families and social relations are still intact. Many, often most, are much improved by the time they complete the program. They are, of course, delighted with the change; they paid money and went through an emotional ordeal, and now receive renewed affection and respect from their family, friends, and co-workers. They had been continually told during treatment that they were helpless, and that only treatment could save them. Many of them fervently believe that they could never have been cured without the treatment.

The sound and the fury signify nothing, however; for the rates of improvement in these disease-oriented treatment programs do not significantly differ from the natural rates of improvement for comparable but untreated demographic groups. That is to say, these expensive programs (which cost between $5,000 and $20,000) contribute little or nothing to the improvement. Even so, the claims that patients leave their programs improved are true; to the layman such claims are impressive. The reality, however, is less impressive, since over half a dozen major studies in the past two decades have concluded that the money, time, and trust expended on these treatments are badly spent.

There is some disagreement about the effectiveness of more modest forms of treatment. Some reports—for example, a major study done by Saxe and his colleagues for the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment—conclude that no single method of treatment is superior to any other (a judgment made by all the major studies). But according to the Saxe study, the data appear to

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show that "treatment seems better than no treatment." That is, some help-oriented intervention of any kind—it doesn't matter which—may contribute modestly to improvement. The now classic British experiment led by Griffith Edwards showed that an hour or so of firm and sensible advice produced overall results as good as those produced by a full year of the most complete and sophisticated treatment procedures in a first-class alcoholism hospital and clinic. Such conclusions have led a number of authorities (including a World Health Organization committee in 1980) to argue for brief informal counseling on an outpatient basis as the preferred method in most cases.

Note, however, that what is now recommended is not really *medical* treatment. Physicians may still control it, and the institutional setting may be "outpatient," but the assistance provided is merely brief, informal, common-sense advice. The medical setting merely adds unnecessary expense.

So much for the optimistic view about "treatment." A British report concludes that "it seems likely that treatment may often be quite puny in its powers in comparison to the sum of [non-treatment] forces."

The more pessimistic reading of the treatment-outcome data is that these elaborate treatments for alcoholism as a disease have no measurable impact at all. In a review of a number of different long-term studies of treatment programs, George Vaillant states that "there is compelling evidence that the results of our treatment were no better than the natural history of the disease." Reviewing other major treatment programs with long-term follow-ups, he remarks that the best that can be said is that these programs do no harm.

New approaches

In recent years, early evaluation studies have been reexamined from a non-disease perspective, which has produced interesting results. For example, it appears that the heaviest and longest-term drinkers improve more than would be expected "naturally" when they are removed from their daily routine and relocated, with complete abstinence as their goal. This group is only a small subset of those diagnosable as alcoholics, of course. The important point, though, is that it is helpful to abandon the one-disease, one-treatment approach, and to differentiate among the many different patterns of drinking, reasons for drinking, and modes of helping drinkers.

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Indeed, when we abandon the single-entity disease approach and view alcoholism pluralistically, many new insights and strategies emerge. For example, much depends on the criteria of success that are used. The disease concept focuses attention on only one criterion—total, permanent abstinence. Only a small percentage of alcoholics ever achieve this abolitionist goal. But a pluralistic view encourages us to value other achievements, and to measure success by other standards. Thus, marked improvement is quite common when one takes as measures of success additional days on the job, fewer days in the hospital, smaller quantities of alcohol drunk, more moderate drinking on any one occasion, and fewer alcohol-related domestic problems or police incidents. The Rand Report found that about 42 percent of heavy drinkers with withdrawal symptoms had reverted to somewhat more moderate drinking with no associated problems at the end of four years. Yet, as non-abstainers, they would count as failures from the disease-concept standpoint.

The newer perspective also suggests a different conception of the road to improvement. Instead of hoping for a medical magic bullet that will cure the disease, the goal here is to change the way drinkers live. One should learn from one's mistakes, rather than viewing any one mistake as a proof of failure or a sign of doom. Also consistent with the newer pluralistic, non-disease approach is the selection of specific strategies and tactics for helping different sorts of drinkers; methods and goals are tailored to the individual in ways that leave the one-disease, one-treatment approach far behind.

Much controversy remains about pluralistic goals. One of the most fiercely debated issues is whether so-called "controlled drinking" is a legitimate therapeutic goal. Some contend that controlled drinking by an alcoholic inevitably leads to uncontrolled drinking. Disease-concept lobbies, such as the National Council on Alcoholism, have tried to suppress scientific publications reporting success with controlled drinking, and have excoriated them upon publication. Some have argued that publishing such data can "literally kill alcoholics." Authors of scientific studies, such as Mark and Linda Sobell, have been accused of fraud by their opponents (though expert committees have affirmed the scientific integrity of the Sobells' work). Attacks like these have been common since 1962, when D. L. Davies merely reviewed the literature and summarized the favorable results already reported in a number of published studies—and was severely criticized for doing so. But since that time hundreds of similar reports have appeared. One recent study concludes

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that most formerly heavy drinkers who are now socially adjusted become social drinkers rather than abstainers.

In any case, the goal of total abstinence insisted upon by advocates of the disease concept is not a proven successful alternative, since only a small minority achieves it. If doubt remains as to whether the controversy over controlled drinking is fueled by non-scientific factors, that doubt can be dispelled by realizing that opposition to controlled drinking (like support for the disease concept of alcoholism) is largely confined to the U.S. and to countries dominated by American intellectual influence. Most physicians in Britain, for example, do not adhere to the disease concept of alcoholism. And the goal of controlled drinking—used selectively but extensively—is widely favored in Canada and the United Kingdom. British physicians have little professional or financial incentive to bring problem drinkers into their consulting rooms or hospitals. American physicians, in contrast, defend an enormous growth in institutional power and fee-for-service income. The selling of the term "disease" has been the key to this vast expansion of medical power and wealth in the United States.

What should our attitude be, then, to the long-term heavy drinker? Alcoholics do not knowingly make the wicked choice to be drunkards. Righteous condemnation and punitive moralism are therefore inappropriate. Compassion, not abuse, should be shown toward any human being launched upon a destructive way of life. But compassion must be realistic: it is not compassionate to encourage drinkers to deny their power to change, to assure them that they are helpless and dependent on others, to excuse them legally and give them special government benefits that foster a refusal to confront the need to change. Alcoholics are not helpless; they can take control of their lives. In the last analysis, alcoholics must *want* to change and *choose* to change. To do so they must make many difficult daily choices. We can help them by offering moral support and good advice, and by assisting them in dealing with their genuine physical ailments and social needs. But we must also make it clear that heavy drinkers must take responsibility for their own lives. Alcoholism is not a disease; the assumption of personal responsibility, however, is a sign of health, while needless submission to spurious medical authority is a pathology.

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Second thoughts about gun control

JAMES D. WRIGHT

GUN CONTROL, it has been said, is the acid test of liberalism. All good liberals favor stricter gun controls. After all, doesn't the United States have the most heavily armed population on earth? Are we not the world's most violent people? Surely these facts must be causally connected. The apparently desperate need to "do something" about the vast quantity of firearms and firearms abuse is, to the good liberal, obvious.

At one time, it seemed evident to me, we needed to mount a campaign to resolve the crisis of handgun proliferation. Guns are employed in an enormous number of crimes in this country. In other countries with stricter gun laws, gun crime is rare. Many of the firearms involved in crime are cheap handguns, so-called Saturday Night Specials, for which no legitimate use or need exists. Many families buy these guns because they feel the need to protect themselves; eventually, they end up shooting one another. If there were fewer guns around, there would also be less crime and less violence. Most of the public also believes this, and has supported stricter gun control for as long as pollsters have been asking the question. Yet Congress has refused to act in a meaningful way, owing mainly to the all-powerful "gun lobby" headed by the National Rifle Associa-

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tion. Were the power of this lobby somehow effectively countered by the power of public opinion, stricter gun laws would follow quickly, and we would begin to achieve a safer and more civilized society.

When I first began research on the topic of private firearms, in the mid-1970s, I shared this conventional and widely held view of the issue. Indeed, much of it struck me as self-evidently true. My initial interest in the topic resulted from a life-long fascination with the bizarre: I certainly did not own a gun (I still don't), and neither, as far as I knew, did many of my friends. Still, readily available survey evidence showed that half the families in the United States did own one, and I wondered what unspeakable oddities or even pathologies an analysis of this half of the American population would reveal.

My first scholarly paper on the topic, "The Ownership of the Means of Destruction," appeared in 1975. This demographic comparison between gun-owning and non-gun-owning households revealed no shocking information. Gun owners, it turned out, were largely small-town and rural Protestants of higher-than-average income. Fear of crime, interestingly enough, did not seem to be related to gun ownership. The general tone of my piece remained unmistakably "anti-gun," but the findings did not provide much new information to strengthen the "anti-gun" lobby's arguments. At about the same time, I prepared a more polemical version of the paper, which was eventually published in the *Nation*. The General Counsel of the National Rifle Association described the piece as "emotionally supercharged drum-beating masquerading as scholarly analysis." Clearly, I was on the right track; I had managed to offend the right people.

The *Nation* article was abridged and reprinted in the Sunday Chicago *Tribune*, a newspaper read by about two million people, many of whom saw fit to write me after the piece appeared. Almost all the letters I received were provocative; some were very favorable, but most were vitriolic attacks from gun nuts. I was accused of being "incredibly biased," "strange and contradictory," of telling "many outright 100% lies," of being "sophistic" and "intellectually dishonest," of being "unable to grasp truth," and of taking "thousands of words to say *nothing* constructive." I answered every letter I received. In a few cases, a long and profitable correspondence developed. The first wave of correspondence over the *Tribune* piece affirmed my assumption that many gun owners were crazy. Subsequent waves, however, convinced me that many were indeed

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thoughtful, intelligent, often remarkably well-read people who were passionately concerned about their "right to keep and bear arms," but were willing, nonetheless, to listen to reason.

Two years later, in 1977, my colleague Peter Rossi and I received a grant from the National Institute of Justice to undertake a comprehensive, critical overview of the research literature on guns, crime, and violence in America. The results of this overview were published in 1981 in a three-volume government report and in 1983 as a commercial monograph, entitled *Under the Gun*. Subsequent to this work, we received another grant to gather original data on gun acquisition, ownership, and use from about 2,000 men doing felony time in ten state prisons all over the United States. We assembled this information in a government report and later in a monograph, *Armed and Considered Dangerous*. The felon survey marked the temporary end of my firearms research program, one that ran roughly from 1974 through 1986, when *Armed and Considered Dangerous* was finally published.

As I have already suggested, at the outset of the research program I had a strong feeling that the pro-gun-control forces had never marshalled their evidence in the most compelling way, that they were being seriously undercut by the more artful polemics of the National Rifle Association and related pro-gun groups. That the best available evidence, critically considered, would eventually prove favorable to the pro-control viewpoint was not in serious doubt—at least not to me, not in the beginning.

In the course of my research, however, I have come to question nearly every element of the conventional wisdom about guns, crime, and violence. Indeed, I am now of the opinion that a compelling case for "stricter gun control" *cannot be made*, at least not on empirical grounds. I have nothing but respect for the various pro-gun-control advocates with whom I have come into contact over the past years. They are, for the most part, sensitive, humane, and intelligent people, and their ultimate aim, to reduce death and violence in our society, is one that every civilized person must share. I have, however, come to be convinced that they are barking up the wrong tree.

What is "gun control"?

Before I describe the intellectual odyssey that led to my change in thinking, it is critical to stress that "gun control" is an exceedingly nebulous concept. To say that one favors gun control, or opposes it, is to speak in ambiguities. In the present-day American political

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context, "stricter gun control" can mean anything from federal registration of firearms, to mandatory sentences for gun use in crime, to outright bans on the manufacture, sale, or possession of certain types of firearms. One can control the manufacturers of firearms, the wholesalers, the retailers, or the purchasers; one can control the firearms themselves, the ammunition they require, or the uses to which they are put. And one can likewise control their purchase, their carrying, or their mere possession. "Gun control" thus covers a wide range of specific interventions, and it would be useful indeed if the people who say they favor or oppose gun control were explicit about what, exactly, they are for and against.

In doing the research for *Under the Gun*, I learned that there are approximately 20,000 gun laws of various sorts already on the books in the United States. A few of these are federal laws (such as the Gun Control Act of 1968), but most are state and local regulations. It is a misstatement to say, as pro-gun-control advocates sometimes do, that the United States has "no meaningful gun control legislation." The problem is not that laws do not exist but that the regulations in force vary enormously from one place to the next, or, in some cases, that the regulations carried on the books are not or cannot be enforced.

Much of the gun legislation now in force, whether enacted by federal, state, or local statutes, falls into the category of reasonable social precaution, being neither more nor less stringent than measures taken to safeguard against abuses of other potentially life-threatening objects, such as automobiles. It seems reasonable, for example, that people should be required to obtain a permit to carry a concealed weapon, as they are virtually everywhere in the United States. It is likewise reasonable that people not be allowed to own automatic weapons without special permission, and that felons, drug addicts, and other sociopaths be prevented from legally acquiring guns. Both these restrictions are in force everywhere in the United States, because they are elements of federal law. About three-fourths of the American population lives in jurisdictions where the registration of firearms purchases is required. It is thus apparent that many states and localities also find this to be a useful precaution against something. And many jurisdictions also require "waiting periods" or "cooling off" periods between application and actual possession of a new firearms purchase. These too seem reasonable, since there are very few legitimate purposes to which a firearm might be put that would be thwarted if the user had to wait a few days, or even a few weeks, to get the gun.

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Thus, when I state that "a compelling case for 'stricter gun control' cannot be made," I do not refer to the sorts of obvious and reasonable precautions discussed above, or to related precautionary measures. I refer, rather, to measures substantially more strict than "reasonable precaution," and more specifically, to measures that would deny or seriously restrict the right of the general population to own a firearm, or that would ban the sale or possession of certain kinds of firearms, such as handguns or even the small, cheap handguns known colloquially as "Saturday Night Specials."

Effects of gun laws

One wonders, with some 20,000 firearms regulations now on the books, why the clamor continues for even more laws. The answer is obvious: none of the laws so far enacted has significantly reduced the rate of criminal violence. *Under the Gun* reviewed several dozen research studies that had attempted to measure the effects of gun laws in reducing crime; none of them showed any conclusive long-term benefits.

As it happens, both sides of the gun-control debate grant this point; they disagree, though, as to why there is no apparent connection between gun-control laws and crime rates. The NRA maintains that gun laws don't work because they can't work. Widely ignored (especially by criminals) and unenforceable, gun-control laws go about the problem in the wrong way. For this reason, the NRA has long supported mandatory and severe sentences for the use of firearms in felonies, contending that we should punish firearms abusers once it is proven that an abuse has occurred, and leave legitimate users alone until they have actually done something illegal with their weapon.

The pro-control forces argue that gun laws don't work because there are too many of them, because they are indifferently enforced, and because the laws vary widely from one jurisdiction to the next. What we need, they would argue, are federal firearms regulations that are strictly enforced all across the nation. They would say that we have never given gun control a fair test, because we lack an aggressive *national* firearms policy.

This example illustrates an important point that I have learned and relearned throughout my career in applied social research: the policy consequences of a scientific finding are seldom obvious. On this particular point, the science is reasonably clear-cut: gun control laws do not reduce crime. But what is the implication? One possible implication is that we should stop trying to control crime by con-

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trolling guns. The other possible implication is that we need to get much more serious than we have been thus far about controlling guns, with much stricter, nationally-standardized gun-control policies. There is little or nothing in the scientific literature that would allow one to choose between these possibilities; either could well be correct.

Guns, crimes, and numbers

What is the annual firearms toll in this country? Our review of the data sources revealed that some components of the toll, especially the annual fatality count, are well known, whereas other components are not. In recent years, the total number of homicides occurring in the United States has been right around 20,000. Of these, approximately 60 percent are committed with firearms. There are somewhat fewer than 30,000 suicides committed in an average recent year, of which about half involve a firearm. Deaths from firearms accidents have represented about 2 percent of the total accidental deaths in the nation for as long as data have been collected, and add about 2,000 deaths per year to the toll. Taken together, then, there are about 30,000 deaths from firearms in an average year; this amounts to some 1-2 percent of all deaths from any cause.

Both camps in the gun control war like to spew out exaggerated rhetoric. In the case of gun deaths, the anti-control forces shout that the total deaths due to firearms in a year are less than the deaths due to automobile accidents (about 50,000)—"but nobody wants to ban cars!" To counter, the pro-control people express the gun toll as a number of deaths per unit of time. The resulting figure is dramatic: on average, someone in the United States dies from a firearm every seventeen or eighteen minutes.

Death is not the whole story, of course. One must also include non-fatal but injurious firearms accidents, crimes other than homicide or suicide committed with guns, unsuccessful suicide attempts involving firearms, and so on. None of these things is known with much precision, and the lack of firm data is an invitation to exuberant formulations on both sides. Still, reasonable compromise values for the various components suggest a total incident count of fewer than a million per year—that is, incidents in which a firearm of some sort was involved in some way in some kind of violent or criminal incident (intentional or accidental, fatal or not). Pro-gun people have dismissed this estimate as much too high, and anti-gun people have dismissed it as much too low, so I figure it can't be too far off.

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When we shift to the guns side of the "guns and crime" equation, the numbers jump by a few orders of magnitude, although here, too, some caution is needed. In the course of the twentieth century, so far as can be told, some 250 million total firearms (excluding military weapons) have been manufactured in or imported into the United States. Published guesses about the number of guns in private hands in this country run upwards to a billion—an absurd and inconceivably large estimate. Most of the published estimates are produced by advocates and thus are not to be trusted, most of all since both sides have vested interests in publishing the largest possible numbers: the pro-gun people, to show the vast number of people whose rights would be infringed by stricter gun controls; the anti-gun people, to show the obvious urgency of the situation.

It is not known for certain how many of the 250 million guns of the twentieth century remain in private hands; 150 million is a sensible guess. Survey evidence dating from at least 1959 routinely shows that about 50 percent of all American households possess at least one firearm, with the average number owned (among those owning at least one) being just over three. Whatever the exact number, it is obvious that there are lots and lots of guns out there—many tens of millions at the very least.

Both sides trumpet these large numbers with relish. To the NRA, these big numbers show clearly that "nothing can be done." The vast size of the private U.S. arsenal renders any effort to control it utterly futile. To the pro-control forces, these same numbers demonstrate, with equal clarity, that "something must be done." The vast size of the private U.S. arsenal makes the effort to control it essential.

The numbers do speak clearly to at least one point: if we are going to try to "control" guns as a means of controlling crime, then we are going to have to deal with the guns already in private hands; controls over new purchases alone will not suffice. Taking the highest plausible value for the number of gun incidents—1 million per year—and the lowest plausible value for the number of guns presently owned—say, 100 million—we see rather quickly that the guns now owned exceed the annual incident count by a factor of at least a hundred; in other words, the existing stock is adequate to supply all conceivable nefarious purposes for at least the next century.

These figures can be considered in another way. Suppose we did embark on a program of firearms confiscation, with the ultimate aim of achieving a "no guns" condition. We would have to confiscate at least a hundred guns to get just one gun that, in any typical

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year, would be involved in any kind of gun incident; several hundred to get just one that would otherwise be involved in a chargeable gun crime; and several thousand to get just one that would otherwise be used to bring about someone's death. Whatever else one might want to say about such a policy, it is not very efficient.

Demand creates its own supply

One of the favorite aphorisms of the pro-gun forces is that "if guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns." Sophisticated liberals laugh at this point, but they shouldn't. No matter what laws we enact, they will be obeyed only by the law-abiding—this follows by definition. If we were to outlaw, say, the ownership of handguns, millions of law-abiding handgun owners would no doubt turn theirs in. But why should we expect the average armed robber or street thug to do likewise? Why should we expect felons to comply with a gun law when they readily violate laws against robbery, assault, and murder?

For the average criminal, a firearm is an income-producing tool with a consequent value that is several times its initial cost. According to data published by Phillip Cook of Duke University, the average "take" in a robbery committed with a firearm is more than $150 (in 1976 dollars) and is three times the take for a robbery committed with any other weapon; the major reason for the difference is that criminals with guns rob more lucrative targets. Right now, one can acquire a handgun in any major American city in a matter of a few hours for roughly $100. Even if the street price of handguns tripled, a robber armed with a handgun could (on the average) recoup his entire capital outlay in the first two or three transactions.

As long as there are *any* handguns around (and even "ban handgun" advocates make an exception for police or military handguns), they will obviously be available to anyone *at some price*. Given Cook's data, the average street thug would come out well ahead even if he spent several hundred—perhaps even a few thousand—on a suitable weapon. At those prices, demand will always create its own supply: just as there will always be cocaine available to anyone willing to pay $200 a gram for it, so too will handguns always be available to anyone willing to pay a thousand dollars to obtain one.

The more militant "ban handgun" advocates urge what is easily recognized as the handgun equivalent of Prohibition. Why would we expect the outcome of "handgun prohibition" to differ from its 1920s predecessor? A black market in guns, run by organized crime, would almost certainly spring up to service the demand. It is, after

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all, no more difficult to manufacture a serviceable firearm in one's basement than to brew up a batch of home-made gin. Afghani tribesmen, using wood fires and metal-working equipment much inferior to what can be ordered from a Sears catalogue, hand-manufacture rifles that fire the Russian AK-47 cartridge. Do we ascribe less ability to the Mafia or the average do-it-yourselfer?

A recent poll of the U.S. adult population asked people to agree or disagree with this proposition: "Gun control laws affect only law-abiding citizens; criminals will always be able to find guns." Seventy-eight percent agreed. There is no reasonable doubt that the majority, in this case, is right.

Crimes of passion

Sophisticated advocates on both sides by now grant most of the preceding points. No one still expects "stricter gun control" to solve the problem of hard-core criminal violence, or even make a dent in it. Much of the argument has thus shifted toward violence perpetrated not for economic gain, or for any other good reason, but rather in the "heat of the moment"—the so-called "crimes of passion" that turn injurious or lethal not so much because anyone intended them to, but because, in a moment of rage, a firearm was at hand. Certainly, we could expect incidents of this sort to decline if we could somehow reduce the availability of firearms for the purpose. Or could we?

Crimes of passion certainly occur, but how often? Are "heat of the moment" homicides common or rare? The fact is, nobody knows. The assumption that they are very common, characteristic of the pro-control world view, is derived from the well-known fact that most homicides involve persons known to one another before the event—typically family members, friends, or other acquaintances. But ordinarily, the only people one would ever have any good reason to kill would be people known intimately to oneself. Contrary to the common assumption, prior acquaintance definitely does *not* rule out willful, murderous intent.

The "crime of passion" most often discussed is that of family members killing one another. One pertinent study, conducted in Kansas City, looked into every family homicide that occurred in a single year. In 85 percent of the cases examined, the police had previously (within the prior five years) been called to the family residence to break up a domestic quarrel; in half the cases, the police had been there five or more times. It would therefore be misleading to see these homicides as isolated and unfortunate outbursts occur-

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ring among normally placid and loving individuals. They are, rather, the culminating episodes of an extended history of violence and abuse among the parties.

Analysis of the family homicide data reveals an interesting pattern. When women kill men, they often use a gun. When men kill women, they usually do it in some more degrading or brutalizing way— such as strangulation or knifing. The reason for the difference seems obvious: although the world is full of potentially lethal objects, almost all of them are better suited to male than to female use. The gun is the single exception: all else held constant, it is equally deadly in anyone's hands. Firearms equalize the means of physical terror between men and women. In denying the wife of an abusive man the right to have a firearm, we may only be guaranteeing her husband the right to beat her at his pleasure. One argument against "stricter gun control" is thus that a woman should have as much right to kill her husband as a man has to kill his wife.

Some will gasp at this statement; no one, after all, has a "right" to kill anyone. But this, of course, is false: every jurisdiction in the United States recognizes justifiable homicides in at least some extenuating circumstances, and increasingly a persistent and long-standing pattern of physical abuse is acknowledged to be one of them. True, in the best of all possible worlds, we would simply do away with whatever gives rise to murderous rage. This is not, regrettably, the world in which we live.

International comparisons

Comparing the United States with other civilized nations in terms of guns, crime, and violence is the "service revolver" in the pro-control armament, the first line of defense against all disputation. The essentials are well-known: there are, in the United States, no strict federal controls over civilian arms, vast numbers of firearms in private hands, and an enormous amount of gun crime and violence. In other nations (England and Japan, for example), there are strict national controls, few guns, and little or no gun crime. Is this not conclusive evidence that strong gun laws reduce gun violence? One would be hard-pressed to find a single example of pro-control writing in which these points are not featured prominently.

It does not take advanced training in research methods to see that in the absence of more detailed analyses, such comparisons are vacuous. Any two nations will differ along many dimensions—history, culture, social structure, and legal precedent, to name a few—and any of these differences (no less than the difference in gun laws

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or in the number of guns available) might well account for the difference in violent crime rates. Without some examination of these other potentially relevant factors, attributing the crime difference to the gun-law or gun-availability difference begs the question.

The English case is commonly cited. It is quite clear, however, that the rates of firearm ownership and violent crime were both extremely low in England for decades *before* that nation's strict gun law was passed, and also that the gun laws have not prevented a very sharp increase in gun crime in England in the past decade. Japan is also commonly cited. In fact, the rate of *non-gun* homicide in the United States is many times higher than the total homicide rate of Japan, so there is also much more to the U.S.-Japan difference than meets the eye.

What is true of comparisons among nations is equally true of other geographic aggregates—for example, regions, states, or counties. Any two aggregates, like any two countries, will have any number of differences—differences that must somehow be held constant in order to make any sense of the differences in crime rates. The methodological point is easy to demonstrate with a single example: it is well known that gun ownership is much more widespread in small towns and rural areas than in big cities. Violent crime, in contrast, is disproportionately a big-city problem. Should we therefore conclude from this evidence alone that guns are not the cause of crime, or that high rates of gun ownership actually reduce crime? Probably not: rather, we should demand something more from the analysis. Without that "something more," nothing of value can be inferred; this is also the case with crude comparisons between the United States and other countries.

Public opinion

Public opinion has always played a key role in the case for stricter gun control. If the effectiveness of "gun control" in reducing crime is in some doubt, as it obviously is, at least little apparent harm would be done by such controls, and the public clearly favors them. If majority sentiment has counted for little or nothing, it is only because of the Machiavellian workings of the gun lobby.

The first "gun control" question in a national poll was apparently asked in the 1930s. Even at that early date, large majorities responded favorably. In 1959, Gallup instituted what is now the standard "gun control" question, asking whether one would favor or oppose a law that required a person to acquire a police permit before purchasing a gun. In the original study, and in many subse-

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quent studies, the proportions favoring such a law have seldom dropped below 70 percent.

These large majorities are interpreted by gun-control advocates as evidence of wide popular demand for stricter gun controls, but the fact is that two-thirds to three-quarters of the American population resides in political jurisdictions in which something similar to the Gallup "police permit" mechanism is *already* in force. The majority sentiment may only represent an endorsement of the status quo, not a demand for bold new gun-control initiatives.

Other gun-control measures that are sometimes asked about—those substantially more stringent than registration or permit requirements—are not, in general, received with much popular enthusiasm. Bans on the manufacture, sale, or ownership of handguns, for example, are rejected by good-sized majorities; government use of public funds to buy back guns and destroy them is rejected by an even larger majority. Mandatory sentencing for the criminal use of a firearm is enormously popular; mandatory sentencing for the illegal carrying or possession of a firearm is less so. In general, the poll evidence suggests that most people support most of the "reasonable social precautions" I discussed earlier, but do not wish to see government go much further. Not incidentally, immense majorities of the population, approaching 90 percent, believe that the Constitution guarantees them the right to own a gun. Pro-control advocates who effusively cite "public opinion" as a principal rationale for stricter gun control rarely comment on this finding.

The Saturday Night Special

The notorious Saturday Night Special has received a great deal of attention. The term is used loosely: it can refer to a gun of low price, inferior quality, small caliber, short barrel length, or some combination of these. The attention is typically justified on two grounds: first, these guns have no legitimate sport or recreational use, and secondly, they are the firearms preferred by criminals. Thus, the argument goes, we could just ban them altogether; in doing so, we would directly reduce the number of guns available to criminals without restricting anyone's legitimate ownership rights.

The idea that the Saturday Night Special is the criminal's gun of choice turns out to be wrong. Our felon survey showed, overwhelmingly, that serious criminals both prefer to carry and actually do carry relatively large, big-bore, well-made handguns. Indeed, not more than about one in seven of these criminals' handguns would

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qualify as small and cheap. Most of the felons wanted to be and actually were at least as well armed as their most likely adversaries, the police. There may well be good reason to ban Saturday Night Specials, but the criminal interest in such weapons is not one of them. Most serious felons look on the Saturday Night Special with considerable contempt.

It is too early to tell how these data will be interpreted among "Ban Saturday Night Special" advocates. The most recent wrinkle I have encountered is that they should be banned not because they are preferred or used by criminals, but because, being cheap, they tend to be owned by unknowledgeable, inexperienced, or irresponsible people. One may assume that cheap handguns, like cheap commodities of all sorts, tend to be owned by poor people. The further implication—that poor gun owners are less knowledgeable, experienced, or responsible than more affluent owners—has, however, never been researched; it is also the sort of "elitist" argument that ordinarily arouses liberal indignation.

What about the other side of the argument—that these guns have no legitimate use? It is amazing how easily people who know little about guns render such judgments. When I commenced my own research, it occurred to me that I ought to find out what gun owners themselves had to say on some of these matters. So I picked up the latest issues of about a half-dozen gun magazines. It is remarkable how informative this simple exercise turned out to be.

One magazine that surfaced is called *Handgunning*, which is specifically for devotees of handgun sports. Every issue of the magazine is full of articles on the sporting and recreational uses of handguns of all kinds. I learned, for example, that people actually hunt game with handguns, which never would have occurred to me. In reading a few articles, the reason quickly became obvious: it is more sporting than hunting with shoulder weapons, and it requires much more skill, which makes a successful handgun hunt a much more satisfying accomplishment.

In my journey through this alien turf, I came upon what are called "trail guns" or "pack guns." These are handguns carried outdoors, in the woods or the wilds, for no particular reason except to have a gun available "just in case" one encounters unfriendly fauna, or gets lost and needs small game for food, or is injured and needs to signal for help. The more I read about trail guns, the more it seemed that people who spend a lot of time alone in the wilds, in isolated and out-of-the-way places, are probably being pretty sensible in carrying these weapons.

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One discussion went on in some detail about the characteristics to look for in a trail gun. It ought to be small and light, of course, for the same reason that serious backpackers carry nylon rather than canvas tents. "Small and light" implies small caliber (a .22 or .25), a short barrel, and a stainless-steel frame (to afford greater protection from the elements). The article mentioned that some of the finest weapons of this sort were being manufactured in Europe, and at very reasonable prices. And suddenly it dawned on me: the small, low-caliber, short-barreled, imported, not-too-expensive guns the article was describing were what are otherwise known as Saturday Night Specials. And thus I came to learn that we cannot say that Saturday Night Specials have "no legitimate sport or recreational use."

It would be sophistic to claim that most Saturday Night Specials are purchased for use as trail guns; my point is only that some are. Most small, cheap handguns are probably purchased by persons of modest means to protect themselves against crime. It is arguable whether protection against crime is a "legitimate" or "illegitimate" use; the issues involved are too complex to treat fairly in this article. It is worth stressing, however, that poor, black, central-city residents are by far the most likely potential victims of crime; if self-protection justifies owning a gun, then a ban on small, cheap handguns would effectively deny the means of self-protection to those most evidently in need of it.

There is another argument against banning small, cheap handguns: a ban on Saturday Night Specials would leave heavy-duty handguns available as substitute weapons. It is convenient to suppose that in the absence of small, cheap handguns, most people would just give up and not use guns for whatever they had in mind. But certainly some of them, and perhaps many of them, would move up to bigger and better handguns instead. We would do well to remember that the most commonly owned handgun in America today is a .38 caliber double-action revolver, the so-called Police Special that functions as the service revolver for about 90 percent of American police. If we somehow got rid of all the junk handguns, how many thugs, assailants, and assassins would choose to use this gun, or other guns like it, instead? And what consequences might we then anticipate?

The handgun used by John Hinckley in his attack on President Reagan was a .22 caliber revolver, a Saturday Night Special. Some have supported banning the Saturday Night Special so as to thwart psychopaths in search of weapons. But would a psychopath intent

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on assassinating a President simply give up in the absence of a cheap handgun? Or would he, in that event, naturally pick up some other gun instead? Suppose he did pick up the most commonly owned handgun available in the United States, the .38 Special. Suppose further that he got off the same six rounds and inflicted the same wounds that he inflicted with the .22. A .38 slug entering Jim Brady's head where the .22 entered would, at the range in question, probably have killed him instantly. The Washington policeman would not have had a severed artery but would have been missing the larger part of his neck. The round deflected from its path to President Reagan's heart might have reached its target. One can readily imagine at least three deaths, including the President's, had Hinckley fired a more powerful weapon.

Reactions

The preceding does not exhaust my skepticism about gun-control doxology; it merely illustrates some of the doubts I have come to entertain. As far as I can tell, the arguments in favor of "stricter gun control" fail nearly every empirical test, although in many cases, I hasten to add, the "failure" is simply that the appropriate research is not available.

There is an interesting asymmetry in the gun-control debate. For rather obvious reasons, the pro-control people want to change things, and the anti-control people are happy enough with the status quo. This implies that the burden of proof typically rests on the pro-control side; they have to show that the suggested changes, whatever they are, would improve conditions. Thus, the pro-control argument is far more commonly advanced via recitation of research findings, statistics, and the like; in many cases, the anti-control argument involves nothing more complicated than a reference to the Second Amendment.

My gun research has been more enthusiastically received in anti-control circles than among pro-control advocates. One prominent pro-control luminary described some of the research in *Under the Gun* as "constructed on an incomplete and misconceived reading of the relevant research, an unwillingness to cumulate circumstantial evidence, and standards of proof that inherently rule out non-experimental conclusions." The NRA reaction was more positive although not uncritical; the entry on *Under the Gun* in the *American Rifleman* read: "Although the authors' anti-gun bias leads them to exaggerate the amount of gun abuse and to praise too readily some poor research, this book is fairly objective and probably the

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best summary of scholarly research on the issue." Much to my relief, however, the reactions of putatively neutral outsiders were neither harsh nor guarded. Thus the review in *Contemporary Sociology* described it as "the most comprehensive review of gun control research yet published," and noted later that "it is the highest compliment to say that this book should have something to offend, or at least annoy, everyone. Both 'gun nuts' and 'gun control nuts' will be discomfited."

Armed and Considered Dangerous came out several years later, in 1986, so all the returns are not yet in. I have taken some fairly hard knocks from pro-control people for believing too literally what the felons in the survey told me—a criticism I accept. And in general, the reaction in pro-gun circles was along the lines of "we told you so," with a subtext that, once again, the sociologists had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars belaboring some very obvious points. But here, too, the reaction in the professional social-science community was largely favorable. The review in *Contemporary Sociology* called it "a must for those interested in firearms, crime, or policy research" and concluded that "the gun control debate will never be the same again."

Grateful though I am for this last comment, it is assuredly wrong. In the "Great American Gun War," as B. Bruce-Briggs has described it in this journal (Fall 1976), as in most other areas of public policy, relatively little turns on factual matters that could be resolved through more and better research; most of what is at issue turns on values, ideologies, and world views that are remarkably impervious to refutation by social-science research. No one who believes deeply that gun control would make this a better world—or that it wouldn't—will be persuaded otherwise by any of the research I or anyone else has done.

Applied social research can often describe a problem well, but it can seldom suggest a viable solution. Most of the implications I have seen fit to draw from my gun research are negative in character: this won't work for this reason, that won't work for that reason, and so on. What to do about guns, crime, and violence in America is a question that has occupied many intelligent and capable people for decades, and no one has yet come up with a compelling, workable, legal answer. It is unlikely that "research" will provide that answer. As for social scientists with an interest in the topic, I think we ought simply to resign ourselves to doing what we do best—capable, informative research—and leave the search for "solutions" to the political process itself. Few of us will be entirely satisfied with the out-

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come; but a political process that proceeds in ignorance of or contempt for the best information we can provide is undesirable. On the other hand, to make too much of the "policy implications" of our research is to suggest that we command an expertise that is not usually at our disposal.

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The hidden jobs debate

LAWRENCE M. MEAD

WE OFTEN think of poverty as a condition visited on the poor by nameless social forces. Poverty appears in government statistics simply as the "status" of certain people, disembodied of its causes. The view that the poor are passive victims of conditions is valid mainly for the elderly and disabled, whom society does not expect to work. It is implausible for families headed by working-aged, able-bodied adults, who today comprise a majority of the poor. For these families, the immediate cause of poverty is often that their adult members do not work normal hours.

The connection between poverty and nonwork is strong. According to Census poverty statistics, in 1984 only 17 percent of the heads of poor families worked full-time, while 51 percent did not work at all, even though only 10 percent of them were elderly. Work effort among the poor has fallen since 1959, when 32 percent of poor family heads worked full-time and only 31 percent did not work at all, even though 22 percent were elderly. The shift is one reason poverty has risen in the past decade.

Nonwork promotes poverty by sharply reducing income. In 1986, less than 4 percent of families whose heads worked full-time were poor, but the rate jumped to 20 percent for heads working

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part-time and 24 percent for heads not working at all. Among female-headed families, the comparable figures were 10, 48, and 56 percent, an even steeper gradient. According to research by Bane and Ellwood, about half of all spells of poverty begin through a drop in family earnings, and three-quarters of them end through an increase in earnings.

Nonwork is also a key cause of dependency, second only to the breakup or nonmarriage of parents. Government figures show that only 5 percent of families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) had earnings at any one time in 1983, though a higher proportion do sometime during a year. David Ellwood has calculated that two-thirds of female family heads who do not work are on welfare, compared with only 7 percent of those who work full-time. A fifth or more of welfare mothers also leave the rolls through work, a route second in importance only to remarriage.

Those who doubt the efficacy of work point to the working, not the nonworking, poor. It is true that 60 percent of poor families remain needy even though they have some earnings. Over a million of them are poor even though their heads work full-time. Yet the number of people who are poor despite work is small compared with the number who are poor for lack of work. The working poor typically combine low wages and a nonworking family. Most families have more than one earner and thus find even low wages sufficient to avoid poverty, if not to achieve affluence. Critics of low wages find it easy to show that one person working at the minimum wage cannot support a family above poverty, but the calculation is artificial. Due to the presence of multiple earners, less than a fifth of workers at the minimum wage actually live in poor families, according to the Congressional Budget Office. In general, low wages cause economic inequality, not poverty. Much the greater cause of poverty and dependency is low working hours.

Why do the adult poor work so little, and what can be done about it? These have become the central issues in antipoverty policy. I focus here on the question of whether jobs exist for poor adults if they seek them, an issue with radical implications for policy. If the poor really cannot work because opportunities are lacking, then government should try to create jobs by stimulating the economy or creating public jobs programs, both of which were staples of federal employment policy during the 1970s. On the other hand, if jobs exist, government should induce employable poor people to accept them, either through denying them welfare benefits or conditioning eligibility on participation in employment programs. The "work-

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fare" movement to require more work effort in welfare is surging, but it depends critically on jobs being available.

The evidence strongly suggests that jobs are normally available to low-skilled job seekers in most areas, yet this has not silenced claims—even among well-informed critics—that they are lacking. The reason is that job availability is not routinely measured, and is inherently difficult to judge. Views of availability also hinge on a number of judgments, more political than empirical, about what it means for a job to be available. These assumptions are terribly sensitive, and neither conservatives nor liberals have wanted to be explicit about them.

The job pessimist view

The dispute between job optimists and job pessimists is not about whether jobs are available in general, but whether they are available to the low-skilled, those most vulnerable to poverty and dependency —especially minorities, women, and youth. The issue, further, is not whether any such workers find jobs, becaue they clearly do, but whether there are enough jobs for all of them, either in the aggregate or among those seeking work at any given time.

Those who contend that jobs are lacking say that the economy systematically produces fewer positions accessible to low-skilled workers than they need. They point especially to the high unemployment of the 1970s and early 1980s. The overall jobless rate touched 10 percent in 1982-83, and much higher rates were recorded for the most vulnerable groups (e.g., 40 percent or more for black youth). Economists and politicians have tended to take joblessness of this magnitude as prima facie evidence that there are not enough jobs for those who seek them.

Job pessimists also speak of adverse trends in the labor market. The economy suffered a number of shocks during the 1970s, particularly the sharp increases in food and energy prices, leading to recessions. Yet at the same time it had to absorb unprecedented increases in the labor force, due to the baby boom generation's coming of age and the sharp rise in the proportion of women seeking employment. A tepid economy could not keep pace with the demand for jobs. In such an environment, welfare recipients seemed to face prohibitive competition in obtaining jobs. Many liberals are prepared to blame the work problem, and hence much of poverty, entirely on these macroeconomic conditions, eschewing the idea that there is anything special about nonwork among the poor.

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Another contention is that, even to the extent jobs are available, there is a "mismatch" between them and the location or skills of the poor. (This case has recently been made by John Kasarda and William Julius Wilson.) Employment is allegedly much less accessible to the poor than it once was. Manufacturing jobs, which offered the best pay to the low-skilled, have left the inner cities for the Sunbelt or gone overseas. Jobs in the service sector have proliferated, but mainly in the suburbs, which are hard for the inner-city poor to reach due to inadequate housing and transportation. A "high-tech" economy based on finance and computing has generated some new employment in the cities, but these jobs demand more education than the poor usually have. A related idea is that there is a "dual" or "segmented" labor market that assures secure, well-paying jobs with government or large firms for the better-off, while confining most poor people to menial or service jobs that are transient and poorly paid.

The fact that most of the unemployed at any given time experience long-term joblessness seems to suggest that they cannot find work. And when the most vulnerable groups find work, tenure in jobs tends to be brief, with workers leaving them frequently, often to withdraw from the labor force. Job pessimists take that to mean that the jobs are short-term or otherwise insecure, hence unreliable for supporting families. Also, a high proportion of jobs recently created are low-paying and part-time.

Finally, survey evidence indicates that the poor and dependent want to work as much as the better-off do. If they fail to do so, pessimists reason, it can only be because of a lack of jobs. As Bradley Schiller puts it, "they share middle-class goals and await improved opportunities to pursue them."

The job optimist response

Job optimists, in contrast, emphasize improving economic trends in recent years. Although measured unemployment was high in the 1970s and early 1980s, by the end of 1987 it had fallen to under 6 percent, a level that many economists consider close to full employment. There have been parallel declines in joblessness among the vulnerable groups, though their rates remain higher.

Optimists reject the charge that the economy has been anemic, pointing to prodigious job creation in recent decades. Between 1970 and 1985, total employment in the U.S. grew by twenty-eight million jobs (or 35 percent). The increase almost balanced a 38 percent increase in the labor force in the same period, due to the demo-

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graphic shifts cited by pessimists. Since 1983, job growth has considerably outpaced growth in the labor force, as a result of recent economic growth and the fall in the number of new workers (due to the passing of the baby boom). The fact that most of these jobs have been in the service sector should favor the poor, since positions in restaurants, hotels, and maintenance and other support services are frequently accessible to people with limited education. The recent prevalence of low-paying and part-time jobs was mainly a result of the recession of the early 1980s, and has receded with the recovery.

The presence of some four million illegal immigrants in the country, mostly in urban areas, is testimony that at least menial jobs must exist here. Without the illegals, many restaurant and laundry owners say they simply could not operate, because most citizens reject "dirty work." Agriculture has to import migrant labor on a regular basis in order to harvest crops. The supply of illegal and migrant labor, moreover, has recently been restricted due to passage of the Immigration Control and Reform (Simpson-Rodino) Act of 1986. Across most of the low-skilled labor market, there is now a manifest labor shortage. The pinch is so great in some suburban areas that employers are paying well above the minimum wage even for unskilled work, and some have taken to transporting labor from inner-city areas.

The notion of a spatial mismatch in the labor market has been undercut by studies showing that inner-city workers' need to commute further to jobs than others is only a minor reason for their much higher unemployment. The fact that they are heavily nonwhite and uneducated has much more to do with it. The skills mismatch involved in the high-tech economy has also been exaggerated. Most employment still requires quite limited capabilities, though literacy is now more often required than formerly. Research based on the Panel Study of Income Dynamics has also failed to sustain the "dual labor-market" theory that low-skilled workers remain trapped in "secondary" jobs for long periods. Rather, workers of all kinds, including blacks, seem to experience considerable mobility over time, both upward and downward. It is mostly those who do not work, not those who do, who stay poor for long periods.

Job optimists also point out that most unemployed people are out of work only briefly, even if long-termers dominate the jobless rolls at any given time. The median term of unemployment in 1986 was less than seven weeks. Joblessness has the same two-faced character as poverty and welfare dependency—long-term for some, but short-term for most. Job turnover is greatest for blacks, women, and

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youth, the groups with the highest unemployment, but Stephen Marston has shown that turnover is linked mostly to the characteristics of the workers, not to those of the jobs. Whether in low-paying or better positions, these groups usually leave work more quickly than other workers.

In surveys, the poor themselves say they can usually find jobs. According to the poverty statistics, only 40 percent of poor adults working less than full-time give inability to find work as the main reason for not doing so, and only 11 percent of those not working at all do so. Other constraints, including illness and child-care responsibilities, are more important, especially for the nonworkers. Even among inner-city black youth, the group with the highest unemployment, 71 percent say they can find a minimum-wage job fairly easily, according to a special survey by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

The verdict

Overall, the evidence strongly suggests that at least low-paying jobs are widely available. Pessimists tend simply to assume that measured joblessness must indicate a job shortage, but most of the research into the labor market suggests otherwise. Martin Feldstein concluded fifteen years ago that "almost every unemployed person can now find a job in a very short time." Today, on the other side of the baby boom, this is probably even truer. However, we can say only that jobs are commonly available *at the margin*, to those seeking them at a given time. We do not know that there would be enough if all the employable poor and dependent tried to work simultaneously. That might depend on their ability to displace the illegal and migrant laborers who now do much of the menial work in the economy.

Only a limited case can be made for a mismatch. Illiteracy does bar many poor adults from better-paying jobs, but apparently not from a great many menial ones. Urban workers clearly have difficulty getting to the job boom in the suburbs. But a labor shortage there does not prove that there is a job shortage in the cities. Rather, most urban poor people seem to be able to find at least low-paying work fairly close to where they live. Recent workfare programs, for instance, report job shortages mainly in rural, not urban, areas.

Reasons for doubt

Why, then, is it possible for experts to argue that jobs are, after all, *not* available to the poor? One reason is that there are inherent

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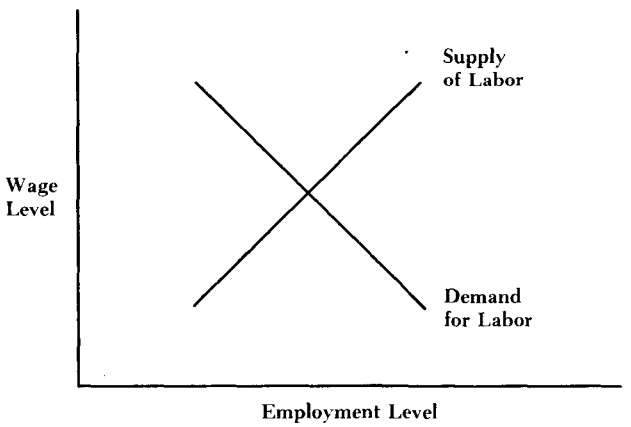
difficulties in judging whether openings exist. To begin with, we have no direct measures of available jobs. The government collects data on employment—that is, on jobs that are already filled—but not on jobs that are unfilled. It collects data on workers without jobs (the monthly unemployment figures), but not jobs without workers.

Economists have done much research on the "labor supply response" of the poor, but mainly in connection with welfare, and without resolving the reasons for nonwork. There is uncertainty because the level of current employment does not reveal the potential for further employment. It reflects an intersection of demand and supply curves in the low-skilled labor market. Figure I shows how these curves interact. Knowing just where the curves intersect does not show the shape or the slope of either of them. In statistical terms, there is an identification problem. This leaves it unclear which curve causes low employment, and whether changing either one of them will solve it.

Figure I: The Labor Market



Liberals typically blame the work problem on the demand curve —the willingness of business to employ low-skilled labor. They say the curve is virtually vertical, hence inelastic or unresponsive. In other words, business will hire only so many poor people, despite their willingness to work. Thus, if government forced more of the poor to seek work—that is, if it shifted the supply curve to the right—the effect would be only to lower the point of intersection, depressing wages without much increasing employment. Instead,

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government should shift the demand curve to the right by somehow producing more jobs. It should also push up the bottom end of the curve to make it more horizontal (i.e., elastic); in other words, it should cause employers to hire more low-skilled workers without depressing wages.

Conservatives, conversely, blame the work problem on the supply curve. They say *it* is virtually vertical, that poor workers are unresponsive to the jobs already offered by business. Hence, steps to move the demand curve to the right would just raise the intersection point, raising wages and costs without much increasing employment. Instead, government should require more of the nonworking poor to accept existing jobs, thereby shifting the supply curve to the right. It should also push down the top end of the curve by persuading more poor people to go to work without demanding excessively high wages.

Without knowing the shape of the curves, either interpretation is plausible. There is also a conceptual problem. One can question whether any point on the curves exists other than the intersection. Do jobs really exist apart from workers who hold them, or workers apart from jobs? Some liberal discussions suggest that the economy creates openings without any reference to the labor supply. The slots are then filled from a "hiring queue," in which the low-skilled stand last. Thus, the poor may be denied work simply because all the slots are filled. Alternatively, in boom time, the demand for workers could exceed supply. This liberal view derives from Keynesian economic thinking and the mass unemployment of the past. It suggests that equilibrium in the labor market can be maintained only by deliberate policymaking.

But if that were true, there would be much less dispute about whether jobs exist. It would be obvious either that willing workers were being denied work on a large scale, as in the Depression, or that jobs were going begging for long periods, as in some suburbs today. In most times and places, however, jobs and workers are roughly in balance. When employers offer jobs, they tend either to be filled quickly or to vanish. Openings advertised in the "want ads," as many have noted, are often filled by the time readers apply for them. If the positions remain unfilled, employers redefine their needs. Conversely, when workers today remain jobless for long periods, they tend to withdraw from the labor force rather than keep looking for work.

In most situations, in other words, there is not enough disequilibrium in labor markets to clearly prove the potential for more em-

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ployment, or the lack of it. That is why it is so unclear what would happen if either the demand or supply of labor were increased. If government raised the demand for unskilled labor, as liberals suggest, would more low-skilled adults actually respond? If it required more nonworkers to seek work at a given wage, as conservatives propose, would business offer them jobs? The answers are unclear, since they depend on what would happen if the labor market changed, not on how it looks today.

Without firm empirical guidance, such judgments hinge ultimately on social philosophy, on one's general views of how responsive the economy is to job seekers and vice versa. What does it mean for a job to be available to the poor, and who is responsible for creating employment? Even when experts debate the "facts" about job availability, the real dispute is often about these political questions.

What is a job?

The availability issue is about jobs. But what is a job? How desirable and accessible must a job be before we say it is "available" to the poor? Conservatives tend to define all legal jobs as available, even if they are menial or low-paying. "Legal" means that the jobs pay the minimum wage and meet other rules for working conditions set by government. From this viewpoint, conservatives can complain that the payment of welfare makes it harder to hire domestics to clean houses, because they believe that even the most demeaning work is legitimate. They also regard even far-away jobs as available. They think jobless poor people should be more willing to move out of cities or across the country to get paying employment.

Liberals, however, want jobs to be attractive, not simply legal. They think that social standards for decency demand jobs with pay and conditions well above the legal minimum. Positions that are menial or "dead-end" are not really "jobs" by this reckoning, and the poor should not have to take them. Nor are jobs "available" to the inner-city poor if they would have to commute more than a short distance to reach them. Most of those who say jobs are lacking qualify the statement to mean "good," "decent," or "meaningful" jobs, an indication that they are somewhat more demanding than proponents of the legalistic conservative view.

What kind of jobs should be viewed as obligatory for welfare recipients who have to meet work requirements? Conservatives say they should have to accept all legal jobs they can fill, even if the wages are too low to get families entirely off welfare or out of poverty. Once recipients have a work history, the reasoning goes, they

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can get better jobs and move up. Liberals, however, generally insist that even the first job be a good one. They resist making recipients take jobs that leave them below the welfare or poverty levels. Current Democratic welfare reform bills, for instance, say that recipients may refuse jobs that, due to loss of benefits, would make them worse off.

The job quality issue is decisive for one's view of availability. The evidence we have suggests that legal jobs are quite widely available today, but "good" jobs remain more competitive. Few of the employable poor say they lack access to work of some kind. They complain, rather, about the quality of these jobs, which are mostly menial and low-paying. The major limitation of the labor market is job *quality*, not *quantity*. To liberals, jobs have to be good enough to serve the traditional interest of the Left in reducing social and income differences, while to conservatives they do not. The real dispute over job availability is often about equality, not opportunity.

The jobs issue is also critical for whether it is feasible to require the poor to work. There might well be enough low-paying jobs for all the employable poor, but there are not enough "good" ones. Thus, the nature of the labor market is such that it is sensible to require the dependent to work only under a conservative notion of acceptable employment, not a liberal one. That is why conservative notions of "workfare" stress putting the poor to work in available jobs, while liberal notions stress training for "better" jobs, often at the expense of immediate employment.

Workfare would be less controversial if "good" jobs could actually be obtained for the poor, but that is unlikely. Government training programs have shown little capacity to raise the earnings of disadvantaged workers, and most of their impact comes from motivating the workers to work more hours, not through increasing their skills and wages. Government can try to create more attractive jobs by promoting rapid economic growth, but that is inflationary. It can also create higher-paying jobs for the poor within government, as it did during the 1970s. But that is costly and, because the jobs are undemanding, may represent only another form of welfare. If employment is to be real, then, most of the poor must work either in private, low-paying positions or not at all. There is little government can do to improve that choice.

Who is a worker?

The number of jobs that are needed depends on the number of workers. But who is a worker? That issue turns on assumptions

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about employability. How good must a worker be before we routinely expect the economy to provide him or her a job? Many people who are poor and unemployed over the long term are marginal workers at best, due to lack of skills, limited education, or ambivalence about work.

In assessing job availability, conservatives tend in effect to deny that these workers deserve jobs. They expect some minimum of competence and discipline from workers before their joblessness presents an issue. Workers lacking these attributes may deserve support without work if they are disabled, but otherwise their predicament is their own responsibility.

Employers also set a minimum. They resist hiring unprepared workers even if they are rewarded by government subsidies. Since 1967, the federal government has offered a number of tax incentives for hiring disadvantaged workers. None has shown much impact on hiring. The most recent is the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit, enacted in 1979 to promote the hiring of low-income youth and a number of other groups. According to Gary Burtless, such credits may actually *depress* hiring of these groups, by stigmatizing applicants in the eyes of potential employers.

Liberals, however, regard everyone who wants a job as an eligible worker, even those with little ability or self-discipline. Liberals often argue that some work should be offered to every worker for strictly economic reasons, lest resources go unused. They also worry, on humanitarian grounds, that the least competent will be left out. What will happen to unskilled black workers, Christopher Jencks asks (in a private communication), if employers reject them in favor of illegal aliens?

> They [the employers] think these workers are more diligent, less uppity, more pliable, less likely to demand promotions, etc., etc. Thus, it is not clear . . . that the fact that such workers get jobs proves anything about the availability of jobs for . . . unskilled or semiskilled blacks. The fact that illegals with the "right" personality traits can get jobs proves no more about the availability of work to people with the "wrong" personality traits than the availability of jobs for B.A.s proves . . . the availability of jobs for dropouts. . . . You might respond, of course, that in a market economy if blacks have such "undesirable" traits from an employer's viewpoint, they will have to settle for even less than illegal Hispanics. But it is not clear that such jobs exist. I don't think you can get a job pouring water and clearing dishes in a restaurant by offering to work for less than the Hispanics who now do the job. The restaurant owners don't want "bad" workers at *any* wage.

If the economy does not provide jobs to incompetent people, in other words, government should.

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Judgments of worker quality, like those of job quality, are decisive for views of job availability. If one defines acceptable jobs broadly but employability narrowly, as conservatives do, jobs will seem widely available. Equally, if one sets more demanding standards for jobs but lower ones for workers, as liberals do, jobs will seem lacking. In terms of the supply and demand curves (Figure I), the conservative position amounts to saying that the current employment level set by the intersection is illusory. There are really more jobs available than workers, and government could expand employment by shifting the labor supply curve to the right. Conversely, liberals say that there are really more workers than jobs, and the level of employment could be raised by increasing demand.

Who is a job seeker?

Another issue is how seriously the unemployed look for work. Unemployment can be taken to show a lack of jobs only if the jobless seek diligently for work and accept the best jobs offered to them. Liberals tend to believe that they do, because jobless workers are not classified as unemployed unless they report efforts to find work. Indeed, some experts feel that "discouraged" workers, who want to work but have given up looking, should be included among the unemployed, a step which would raise the jobless rate substantially. On the other hand, the unemployed may exaggerate how much they look for work, and the official unemployment definition does not require that they be realistic about what job they will accept. They can search indefinitely for high-paying jobs, declining lesser ones, and still be counted as unemployed.

Conservatives suspect that job search is often dilatory. The evidence we have supports them. According to a special government survey of job-search behavior done in 1976, most jobless workers set fairly demanding conditions for acceptable jobs. On average, workers who have lost jobs demand an *increase* in pay to return to work, and their demands decline only slowly as their unemployment continues. Furthermore, only about a third of the jobless will commute more than twenty miles, or move, to get access to new jobs. We also know that perhaps a third of claimants of Unemployment Insurance (UI) do not look for work, as they are supposed to do, and that enforcement of job search and other rules in UI reduces the unemployment rate.

Depression-era images of unemployment live on in politics, but are outdated. For most unemployed today, joblessness is at least partly voluntary. The jobless are shielded from a need to urgently

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seek work by government benefits, or by earnings of other family members. Because more women and youth are seeking jobs, many of the jobless today are "secondary" workers—members of families in which others are already working. Thus, they can often afford to be choosy about what job they will accept. They are shopping for work in a situation in which they need not buy. Thus unemployment today indicates a desire to work, but not necessarily a lack of jobs.

One might suppose that job search would be more strenuous among the groups most vulnerable to poverty, but the evidence suggests that it is even more erratic. Blacks, women, and youth often do not come to terms with the reality of the labor market, even when they are needy and jobs are available. According to the NBER survey, inner-city black youth tend to demand positions as good as white youth get, even though they are less able to obtain them due to weaker backgrounds. Thus, they work much less steadily.

Today's tight labor market has brought many fewer low-skilled people into the work place than in previous periods of low unemployment, such as World War II and the late 1960s. Government statistics suggest that there are some ten to twenty million nondisabled adults who are working less than was formerly expected, of whom six million, including many on welfare, do not even seek work, though they say they want it. The number of nonworkers is rising even in Massachusetts, where unemployment has been below 4 percent for nearly three years.

Nor do the poor respond to hard times. During the 1970s, chronic economic problems—recessions and persistent inflation—caused real incomes to fall for rich and poor alike. Many of the nonpoor compensated by working more. Men took on extra jobs, and women flooded into the labor force as never before. Average working hours rose. Among people who were poor and dependent over the long term, however, there was a flat or negative response. Work levels of those on welfare rose hardly at all, despite a fall in benefits in real terms, and black men reduced their labor-force participation rate from 77 percent in 1970 to 71 percent in 1985, twice the drop for whites. The poor may have fewer opportunities available to them than the better-off, but they differ much more sharply in their *response* to opportunity, which is much more passive.

Close observation of the long-term poor suggests that their desire to work is sincere, but also aspirational. These adults crave the self-respect, and the respect of others, that only employment can give. But they feel committed to work only if they can get "good" jobs,

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which few of them have the skills to do. Faced with low-paying employment, they typically work only intermittently or drop out in favor of unemployment, welfare, or the underground economy, where unskilled labor earns more. They often feel, as well, that they cannot work unless government handles the logistics—finding them a job and arranging child care, training, and transportation.

The job availability question revolves, in large measure, around how seriously one takes this work aspiration. In what sense do the poor want to work and look for work? For liberals, it is enough that they want to work in principle; it is society's responsibility to assure them jobs they will want to accept. But for conservatives, the mere desire to work is meaningless without a willingness to take existing jobs—if necessary, menial ones. As long as the poor do not accept positions below their hopes, one cannot say that they truly want to work, or that jobs are unavailable.

Who should economize?

A related issue is who is responsible for achieving employment. Who must economize, so as to reconcile the demands of jobs and workers? If it is the individual, as conservatives say, then workers must choose the best jobs they can get without expecting government to improve the choice. If it is society, as liberals say, then government must, through some form of economic policy, produce jobs that meet the expectations of workers.

A relevant question is who in fact creates employment. The liberal assumption, again, tends to be that the economy creates jobs without any reference to the available labor. That view clearly has some plausibility in an economy in which growth has been driven by new technology rather than employment considerations—most recently, by computing and telecommunications. However, it is also true that investment is guided by the quality and location of available workers. States and nations compete for new jobs on the basis of which can meet the employment needs of incoming firms. In the aggregate, even low-skilled workers can influence that choice. Employers have left cities not only because the returns were greater in the suburbs or the Sunbelt; they have also been driven out by inner-city crime and falling school standards, which mean they cannot obtain reliable workers.

The notion that workers are limited to fixed "slots" defined by the economy is inconsistent with the reality of job hunting, particularly in the current economy. Job seekers who just look for an "opening" and a paycheck tend to be passive, and offer little to

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employers. Successful applicants tend to define their own skills and interests, then seek out employers who will let them pursue these. They are often hired even though there is no "slot" simply because they have potential. In this sense, they create their own jobs. This is especially true in the fast-changing "information economy," where firms tend to hire people first, then train them for specific positions. They look above all for basic skills and the ability to commit oneself to a task.

When conservatives say there is work available, they assume that job seekers can respond to business needs by offering such skills and commitment. When liberals say jobs are unavailable, they are thinking of poor people who often lack those qualities, and who do not respond. The real issue is whether the worker should be held responsible for meeting the needs of the economy or vice versa. Whereas conservatives project the demands of the economy onto the poor, liberals project the needs of the poor onto the economy. Who should adapt to whom?

More specifically, how selective may the economy be in its search for labor? Most would say that employers should not discriminate against workers on grounds of race or sex, but that they are entitled to reject or dismiss those who are persistently dishonest or uncooperative. Ascriptive characteristics are not subject to choice or (in most cases) relevant to performance, but skills and moral qualities are. But what about characteristics that fall between these extremes, such as raw ability, education, or personal style? Many poor job seekers fail to find jobs because they seem less disciplined or prepared than the average worker, or because their appearance or manner offends employers. Who bears the onus in this instance, the employee or the economy? Who must adjust? The answer shapes one's view of how much opportunity the economy offers.

The politics of dependency

The contestants in the jobs debate should discuss these issues more openly than they do, rather than pretending that hard numbers or research can settle whether jobs are available.

Those who say jobs are lacking should have to explain why jobs picking apples in upstate New York, for which growers regularly import Jamaican labor, are not really "available" to the poor. Why should men on welfare in New York City not have to do this work, either in place of or in return for benefits? Why, as the architects of government jobs programs have presumed, do disadvantaged job seekers deserve relatively comfortable, well-paying positions in pub-

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lic agencies, on the assumption that they are otherwise unemployable, when aliens who are no better prepared are washing dishes in American restaurants?

Conversely, conservatives should have to explain why they view as "available" many menial jobs that better-off people—ostensible adherents of the "work ethic"— would themselves not want to take. They should have to explain why they believe that many poor adults, including uneducated men and welfare mothers, have an obligation to work, when others consider these same adults disabled or exempt from the normal work expectation. What is the basis for these judgments?

Such issues are extremely sensitive, but they lie at the heart of current domestic policy. Since the New Deal, Americans have expected government to assure opportunity, which means defending them against economic adversities—particularly mass unemployment—that individuals cannot control. Various economic interests have also obtained subsidies or protection from the free market. But the responsibility for personal functioning has implicitly remained with individuals. It has been up to them to muster the skills and discipline needed to make use of opportunity. Even subsidized groups have had to function economically to earn a living. Truckdrivers with protected rates have still had to deliver their cargoes, and farmers with government price-supports have still had to grow crops. The competence assumption was also made by the civil-rights reforms of the 1960s, which presumed that minority Americans could get ahead on their own, once they were given the chance.

But for the current poverty population, that assumption is in doubt. Yesterday's poverty commonly arose from economic hardships affecting whole regions, classes, or industries. Today's usually arises from problems of conduct among the poor themselves—illegitimacy, family breakup, crime, failure in school, and most importantly, nonwork. As Nathan Glazer has observed, at the heart of long-term welfarism is the reluctance of many poor adults to work steadily at menial jobs that in previous generations supported families. The competence assumption has proved valid for most blacks, who have entered the middle and working classes, but not for the underclass.

As a result, the nature of claims on government has changed. Vulnerable groups ask not only for opportunity, but also for extensive personal support. They want government not only to assure favorable economic conditions, but also to provide benefits that, in effect, take over many of the burdens of personal coping that the

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New Deal left to the individual. Through its various welfare, anti-poverty, and pension programs, government compensates for the problems of family breakup and nonwork that are now serious social problems. Whereas the older economic claims assumed a competent citizenry, the new claims arise from various kinds and degrees of incompetence.

The adjudication of these new economic claims requires a language of dependency—a way of rationalizing or rejecting them, of apportioning responsibility for coping between the individual and society. Earlier reasoning about political and economic rights will not suffice, however we try to adapt it. Poverty is no longer predominantly a "civil rights" problem, because equal oportunity is not an answer to family instability. Nor is it a "New Deal" problem, because government measures to raise employment do little good when the poor do not work. Rather, we have to deal much more specifically with the difficulties faced by the poor in coping with personal responsibilities. We have to decide which of them government can and should try to surmount, and which it should not.

Established political theorists, including John Rawls and his critics, hardly address the problem of competence, and thus are irrelevant to this central issue of social policy. The jobs debate, however technical it may seem, does speak to the issue, because it turns more explicitly on the capabilities one can expect of the poor. The experts who debate the issue are really reasoning about permissible degrees of incompetence and dependency. They are the true philosophers of the welfare state.

It is a role they play only reluctantly. Conservatives are loath to admit that what is a job, as well as other issues involved in availability, are political questions. They would like to establish only that legal jobs exist and to leave unspoken their assumption that the poor should take them, at whatever cost. They would like the poor to pursue menial work with the diligence shown by the Joad family in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, when it journeyed across the country seeking stoop labor harvesting crops.

But since the Depression, wages and conditions of work have been set primarily by government, according to what the public thinks is fair. Americans today clearly do not want jobless people to have to wander endlessly in search of work or to be paid the pittance that farm workers earned in the 1930s. Conservatives must be willing to join a debate about what working expectations should be, and must cease trying to avoid it by appealing to impersonal economic laws.

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Liberals, for their part, discern the political nature of work standards but interpret them too permissively. The public definitely wants poor adults to work more consistently in existing jobs, especially if they are on welfare. Liberals, with their demanding views of what a job should be and their reluctance to expect serious work effort from the poor, are distinctly out of step. Essentially, the liberal idea of solving the work problem is for government to provide the poor with jobs connoting "success," regardless of competence or effort. But success is not something government can give. It must be earned by performance that commands the respect of others. The liberal view ignores the demand for reciprocity, for effort in return for support, that emerges so strongly from polls about welfare policy.

Toward consensus

A more candid debate about work standards would probably serve the purposes of both sides. The public demands that existing jobs be accepted, and it rejects voluntary unemployment by poor adults, particularly if they are dependent. If more of the poor were required to work, they would be better off, and the need for welfare and other social programs would decline. To that degree, conservative values would be served.

But if the work obligation were ever enforced, Americans would also be receptive to raising the minimum wage and otherwise improving working conditions—for example, by guaranteeing health insurance to all. More of the poor would be working, hence able to demand things from government the way the middle class does, on the basis of desert rather than need. They might retain their past resentments, but by working they would have much more power to do something about them. They could form stronger unions and shift electoral politics to the left; we might finally see serious proposals for socialism in the United States. The effect might be to radicalize, not conservatize, American politics.

Much of the debate over workfare comes down to whose agenda should be served first. Should job standards be raised before or after the poor go to work? Most of the jobs now available to the unskilled are indeed unattractive, and most Americans would probably want to raise their pay and conditions at some point. But liberals want this done *before* employment is expected, while conservatives would allow it only after, if at all.

The conservative position is probably more consistent with American values and experience. It was destitute people with a work history, not those without one, who successfully demanded

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the reforms enacted in the New Deal, which first set federal standards for pay and working conditions. Likewise, to get better jobs, the poor must first accept existing ones, then organize and press for reform. Claims based on desert will always outweigh those based on need. Only functioning citizens can claim new economic rights.

The contestants in the jobs debate think it is better to avoid these larger questions. Conservatives would rather talk about job quantity than open a debate about job quality, which might raise public expectations higher than they are. Liberals know that the claim that opportunity is lacking has more appeal to the public than does their real agenda, which is to secure better jobs for the low-skilled than the market offers. But a more candid debate is essential if a consensus on work policy is ever to be achieved. Both sides should address the real issues more boldly: How good a job does one have to have to command respect in this society? Who is responsible for providing it? What competence do we really expect of citizens?[1]

[1] I gratefully acknowledge comments by Roberto Ifill and Robert Reischauer on previous drafts of this essay.

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The costly retreat from marriage

BRYCE J. CHRISTENSEN

THE COSTS OF providing medical care in America, it is frequently noted, have skyrocketed in the recent past, and promise to continue doing so in the future. There is, of course, at least a partial solution to this problem, one involving little or no expenditure of either public or personal funds. This solution calls for an increased emphasis upon preventive medicine: exercising and dieting today help to avert heart disease tomorrow; not smoking now increases the likelihood of avoiding lung cancer later.

My purpose in writing this essay is to suggest something else that Americans can do on their own to improve their health, something that government ought to do more to encourage—Americans can get married and stay married. Quite simply, marriage, no less than jogging and lowering cholesterol intake, is good for your health. Althought it is obviously up to individual Americans to decide whether to marry, stay single, or divorce, it is nevertheless past time for policymakers to acknowledge the profound health benefits of marriage: the nation's runaway medical costs could be partially controlled were government to implement policies that did more to foster and encourage longer-lasting, child-producing marriages.

The new evidence linking health to marriage and family life is voluminous. Writing recently in *Social Science and Medicine*,

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Catherine K. Riessman and Naomi Gerstel observe that "one of the most consistent observations in health research is that married [people] enjoy better health than those of other marital statuses." Drs. Riessman and Gerstel note that compared with married men and women, the divorced, single, and separated suffer much higher rates of disease morbidity, disability, mental neuroses, and mortality. "This pattern has been found for every age group (20 years and over), for both men and women, and for both whites and nonwhites." According to James Lynch of the University of Maryland Medical School, the health advantage enjoyed by the married over the unmarried has actually grown in recent decades.

Only a small fraction of the statistical health gap separating the married from the single and divorced can be accounted for by the common-sense observation that sick people either don't get married or don't make satisfactory marriage partners. According to Dr. Lynch, married people are healthier largely because marriage per se "influences the general life-style of the individual." In a study published recently in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Debra Umberson of the University of Michigan finds that mortality rates are "consistently higher" for the unmarried than for the married, because marriage exerts a "deterrent effect on health-compromising behaviors" such as excessive drinking, drug use, risk-taking and disorderly living. By providing a system of "meaning, obligation, [and] constraint," family relationships markedly reduce the likelihood of unhealthy practices. Interestingly, Dr. Umberson's research also underscores the difference between the widowed and the divorced. Although both groups have poorer health habits than the married, the habits of the divorced are far worse than those of the widowed.

In his research into the effects of marriage on health, Harold Morowitz of Yale University concludes that "being divorced and a non-smoker is slightly less dangerous than smoking a pack or more a day and staying married," adding facetiously that "if a man's marriage is driving him to heavy smoking he has a delicate statistical decision to make."

Happily and healthily wed

The advantage that the married enjoy over the unmarried in death rates due to cancer and heart disease is astonishing. The lung-cancer rate for divorced men is twice that for married men, while the rates for some forms of cancer (genital, buccal, and pharyngeal) are three to four times as high among the divorced. The pattern among divorced women, while not quite so stark, is similar. Among

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both men and women, the single and divorced die from hypertensive heart disease at rates between two-and-a-half and three-and-a-half times those found among the married. Dr. Lynch reports that even when their diseases are not fatal, divorced and single people stay in the hospital longer than do married men and women suffering from the same illnesses. This pattern of longer hospital stays is costing America "uncounted billions of dollars" every year.

Just as impressive are the mental-health benefits bestowed by marriage. According to Peggy A. Thoits of Indiana University, "married persons have significantly lower anxiety and depression scores than unmarried persons, regardless of gender." Dr. Thoits notes that married individuals appear to enjoy better mental health even when they have experienced more potentially traumatic experiences than the unmarried. Surprisingly, even the mentally ill sometimes find psychological benefits in marriage. The British medical journal, the *Lancet*, recently reported that in some cases marriages between the mentally ill prove "stable and may even show improved function. . . . The support provided by a shared mental disability may have a beneficial effect."

Some feminists have claimed that marriage benefits only men; but available health statistics show otherwise. While men do realize a somewhat greater health advantage from marriage than women, both sexes are clearly healthier if married than if unmarried. The latest findings only partially confirm Emile Durkheim's famous hypothesis that marriage is more important for the mental health of men than for that of women, while raising children is more important for women than for men. According to Dr. Umberson's 1987 study, "marriage and parenting relationships work together to deter health-compromising behaviors" for both men and women. In fact, for at least one disease—breast cancer—marriage protects women's health in particular, by increasing the likelihood that they will bear two or more children: a recent study at the University of Bergen in Norway found a correlation between the number of children a woman has borne and her likelihood of developing breast cancer, with the childless and the mothers of only one most vulnerable.

Nor is it just husbands and wives whose health is affected by marriage. In a study published last year in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers at the National Center for Health Statistics found that unmarried women, compared with married women, run "a substantially higher risk of having infants with very low or moderately low birth weights." Because birth weight is one of the best predictors of infant mortality, many more illegitimate than

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legitimate babies die. The NCHS researchers believe that marriage exerts no "direct causal influence on the outcome of pregnancy," but that a life course that includes marriage is likely to be healthier than one that does not. (For example, unmarried mothers are more likely to smoke than married mothers.)

Though divorce is less threatening to a child's health than is illegitimacy, it still takes its toll. The *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* reports that divorce increases the likelihood of mental disturbances among children, with over a third of children still "troubled and distressed at the five year mark" (after their parents' divorce). According to John McDermott of the University of Hawaii, "divorce is now the single largest cause of childhood depression." Dr. Lynch believes that parental divorce not only causes mental neuroses among children, but also contributes to "various physical diseases, including cardiac disorders," later in their lives. The *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* reports that members of single-parent families also complain more frequently of less serious maladies, including "headaches, backaches, tummy aches, listlessness, . . . depression, [and] a host of other ailments," than do those in two-parent households. Finnish health authorities at the University of Tampere find that children from non-intact families are much more likely to require medical attention for psychosomatic symptoms than children from intact families. The ailments, real and imagined, of children from single-parent homes may well persist, creating sizable public costs in the decades ahead.

The flight from marriage

The latest health findings should foster concern about falling marriage rates. In recent years, as the national media have glamorized the freedom and excitement of the single "life-style," an unprecedented number of young people have decided that marriage should be avoided—or at least postponed. Since 1970 the American marriage rate has fallen 30 percent, while the divorce rate has climbed 50 percent. By 1983 the average age at first marriage had risen to 24.5 for women and to 26.8 for men. If current trends continue, one American in seven will never wed. But the statistics already cited suggest that the fern bar and health spa may serve as mere way stations for singles headed for the hospital—or the cemetery.

During the 1970s, Americans witnessed what Lenore Weitzman has called "the divorce revolution." Within a decade, legislators in almost every state replaced traditional divorce laws with new "no-fault" statutes that made it much easier to dissolve a marriage. Cul-

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tural attitudes changed, as divorce shed its stigma as a "calamity" or "tragedy" and came to enjoy widespread acceptance as a simple "uncoupling," or even a laudable act of "courage," a valuable "growth opportunity." Although the divorce rate has shown signs of leveling off, it is still 50 percent higher than it was in 1970. Demographers estimate that 44 percent of all marriages formed in 1983 will end in divorce. Weitzman has documented the harmful, if unintended, economic consequences of the divorce revolution for both women and children.

Epidemiologists are now accruing data on the harm done to health by the divorce epidemic. A 1984 study by the National Center for Health Services concluded that divorced women were not only less healthy than married women, but also more likely to rely on public assistance in securing medical care. This finding is especially striking because "the divorced population is somewhat younger than the married." Researchers at Case Western Reserve University have also found that marriage tends to provide some protection against serious physical illnesses even when the marital union is strained. In looking at couples who had once filed for divorce but then retracted their petitions, the researchers found that these reconciled couples were "less likely than the divorced to be sick enough to be in bed."

Clearly, public-health officials have reason to worry about what demographer Robert Schoen has described as America's "retreat from marriage." The medical costs created by this social trend will surely strain government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. Indirect effects ought also to be taken into account. The social retreat from marriage not only drives up the nation's future medical bills, but also reduces the number of future taxpayers available to pay those bills. In explaining why our national fertility rate has languished below replacement level for more than a decade, Ben Wattenberg points to the trend toward fewer, later, and less stable marriages. Although illegitimacy rates have risen significantly since 1950, unmarried women still bear far fewer children than do married women. While the birthrate for married women aged 18-44 stands at 92.0 per 1,000 women (an historic low), the birth rate for unmarried women in the same age group remains much lower (33.4 per 1,000). Fewer babies now mean a much smaller tax base in thirty or forty years. Wattenberg believes that the "birth dearth" could cause Social Security to fail early in the next century, if—as is widely predicted—the Social Security trust fund is combined with the Medicare trust fund.

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As low fertility erodes the tax base, it simultaneously imposes higher public costs for institutionalization of the elderly. Recent surveys show that taxpayers bear the burden of institutionalizing the elderly far less frequently when they are married and have three or more children than when they are single or divorced, or when they have few or no children. Looking at statistics from 1976, Stephen Crystal concludes that "the more children an older person has had, the smaller the odds of institutional placement." Historians have noted a similar pattern in the early years of this century. A 1910 Massachusetts survey found that almost 60 percent of the aged poor then living in almshouses or benevolent homes had no living adult children; a Pennsylvania survey in 1919 found that almost two-thirds of those living in almshouses had no living children; comparable statistics were reported in a 1929 National Civic Federation Survey conducted nationwide. Clearly, if fewer American marriages ended in divorce and fewer American families were small, nursing-home care would not consume 41 percent of all Medicaid expenditures.

Worse, however, is in store. Writing in the *American Journal of Public Health*, researchers from Vanderbilt University predict that the increased future costs of providing nursing-home care for aging Americans without children able or willing to care for them in their homes will be troublesome. The anticipated increase of $6 billion (in 1982 dollars) in nursing-home expenses by the year 2012, they warn, will "exacerbate . . . intergenerational conflict."

Policy implications

Public-health officials are already beginning to rediscover the importance of marital and family relationships in their fight to contain ballooning health costs. Richard Morse of Kansas State University sees "some movement, at present, to deny welfare or Medicaid to those individuals whose families cannot prove they are unable to perform that responsibility." Alexa K. Stuifbergen of the University of Texas at Austin likewise believes that "policymakers are increasingly looking to the family as a hedge against the rising cost of health care services."

This rediscovery of family responsibility could mark a positive first step in reshaping public-health policy. Unless, however, it is matched by some policies that help intact marriages, the rediscovery of family responsibility could create economic injustices: it could push intact families to the end of the line of those eligible for federal benefits, while keeping them near the front of the line of

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those responsible for paying for those benefits. One possible approach would be to restructure Medicare rates so that married recipients pay a lower monthly premium than the unmarried. But it is politically unthinkable and ethically questionable for government to favor the married over the unmarried directly: millions of older Americans are unmarried because of the death of a spouse; many others either had no opportunity to marry or divorced only for the most serious of reasons, after making every effort at reconciliation.

Yet policymakers could benefit most young marriages by framing a tax policy that offers greater advantages to households with children present. First, tax reformers could raise the personal federal income-tax exemption for dependent children from $2,000 to $4,000. (Even at $4,000 the personal exemption would remain hundreds of dollars below its 1948 value, when adjusted for inflation.) Second, the income ceiling for the Earned Income Tax Credit could be raised—to perhaps $25,000 or $27,500—and the benefits could be scaled to the number of children in the home (while still restricting the credit to no more than the total payroll taxes paid by the recipient). Third, the current child-care tax credit could be universalized, allowing households with a stay-at-home mother to share the benefits now received by dual-income homes.

Admittedly, such a child-centered approach would help unwed and divorced mothers, but not childless couples and older married couples with no children at home. Yet the young married couple remains the most fertile unit and would therefore receive most of the benefits. Although married American women now bear fewer children than in past decades, only about one married couple in twenty is both childless and infertile. Even a cohabiting couple is only half as likely as a marrried couple to have a child in its household. Moreover, improving the economic status of the nation's children is a worthy policy objective in itself, quite apart from the gain for marriage. The two objectives of helping children and encouraging marriage could actually prove mutually reinforcing: married couples might well choose to have more children if some of the economic hardship of childrearing were eliminated, while children arguably provide the strongest cement for a marital union. It is no accident that the divorce rate dropped during the baby boom of the 1950s.

Many of the forces fueling America's retreat from marriage are ultimately cultural, hence not under the direct control of policymakers in a liberal democracy. Nonetheless, policymakers must cope with the rising medical costs created by the flight from marriage. In discharging this responsiblity, simple prudence suggests the need for

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approaches that will reduce these medical costs by encouraging marriage. At the same time, justice dictates that those who build successful marriages and families be relieved of at least some of the public burdens created by those who repudiate marriage. Child-based tax benefits could help achieve these objectives without unfairly penalizing those who are unmarried for reasons beyond their control.

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The Balkans by the bay

DENNIS J. COYLE

WE WERE leaving Kingsport, that once-proud "model city" in the Tennessee hills that had slid into obscure mediocrity, and heading to California, the land of opportunity. We piled our belongings in the back and on top of our Ford Fiesta, and headed west on Interstate 40. We traced the route traveled in harshness and hope by so many families searching for new opportunities, when the earth had dried up and the economy had gone sour. Across the dusty plains of Oklahoma and Texas and past the barren red rock of New Mexico and Arizona they went, and we followed. Where the migrants of the 1930s coaxed aging trucks along two-lane roads, we pushed the speed limit on the four-lane highway. But the small car laden with our worldly goods bore an odd resemblance to the broken-down jalopies with somber-faced families that are seen in aging photographs.

We were drawn to California, where others had gone seeking steady employment, by the dubious lure of graduate school at Berkeley. Many earlier migrants had been rudely scorned by the land of opportunity, turned back at the border or reduced to scrambling for meager wages and living in degrading conditions. Many of the "Okies" stayed on and survived, and John Steinbeck fed his reputation and his fortune on vivid stories of the Great Depression. But the hard times passed, and prosperity came to California.

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There are, however, still guardians at the gate in California, trying to keep the fruits of paradise for the favored few who arrived before the latest wave of newcomers. Self-interest has always been a driving force in politics, but today's gatekeepers use the rhetoric of selflessness, wrapping themselves in the fine cloth of "neighborhood," "community," and "environmentalism." The grapes of wrath have been replaced by the wrath of "neighborhoodism."

San Francisco is a city in love with its past. Not necessarily its real past, in which residents faced fires and earthquakes and the usual rigors of harsh working conditions, crime, and the like—but the mythical past, the patrician past, the days before the great drawbridges spanning the Bay were let down and the swarms of newcomers migrated to the city by the Bay seeking jobs, housing, and opportunity. If only—the dream goes—the bridges could be raised and the city could slip back into the fog, back to the happy days when life was serene, unhurried, and uncrowded, and no one had to worry about finding a place to park.

San Francisco has always been a city of change, of opportunity and surprises. Outsiders have been making their fortunes and losing their shirts here since the forty-niners survived their arduous journey in search of gold. The city has seen boom and bust, furious growth and utter destruction; it has produced great culture, great food, and great fortunes, as well as enough seedy bars and sleazy characters to earn its reputation as an open port city. San Francisco has always blended the crude and the sublime, and has remained vibrant by embracing the new and unexpected, while revering the venerable.

Thwarting change

But change can be threatening as well as invigorating, and political power in San Francisco is now being seized by those who wish to stop change in the city, harkening back to a selective past and closing the door of opportunity to those who arrive too late. Already, the daunting obstacles businesses must face in the city are accelerating the rise of Los Angeles as the new financial capital of the West, and steering job growth toward the southern part of the state and Bay Area suburbs that have not yet put up the no-vacancy sign. Even under the administration of outgoing Mayor Diane Feinstein, a strong advocate of the city's attractions to foreign and domestic investors, job growth barely kept pace with the exodus of jobs to the suburbs. Large corporations, reluctant to run the gauntlet of permit processes, exactions, public hearings, and "beauty contests" now re-

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quired for major expansion, have increasingly come to doubt that the city is willing to accommodate their future needs.

Wariness in the corporate community is reflected in reduced support for the arts. San Francisco, once the foremost cultural city in the West, has seen the symphony, the opera, and its art museums cut their schedules and scale back expansion plans. While some San Franciscans remain confident of their cultural superiority, the energy in the arts, as in business, is shifting south.

City leaders and neighborhood activists profess a commitment to expanding job opportunities and affordable housing in the city, but any proposal that promises expansion of employment, new housing, street improvements, or additional parking to ease the city's seemingly permanent gridlock is liable to encounter immediate militant opposition. Fear of change is hardly unique to San Francisco or the Bay Area, but what is noteworthy is the extent to which the land-use regulation process has been politicized and captured by obstructionist forces.

The catalyst for the revolution in city politics was the unprecedented downtown building boom during the 1970s and early 1980s. High-rise office buildings sprouted like mushrooms in the moist climate of San Francisco, as the city became a major corporate center. The resentment of many city dwellers was heightened by the dubious quality of downtown architecture, such as the somber black bulk of the Bank of America paperweight, and the always controversial Transamerica hypodermic needle.

The Planning Department saw the signs of changing politics; backed by Mayor Feinstein, it pushed through the Downtown Plan, which was finally approved in 1985. Planning was to cure the sins of the free market. New office-building construction would be limited to 950,000 square feet, about enough for two mid-size office towers; this set off a flurry of activity by developers and their attorneys, who sought to gain approval and begin construction before the ax fell. To ensure that new buildings would be architecturally correct, Planning Director Dean Macris became a sort of planning czar, prescribing the appropriate styles, such as tapered rooflines (called "party hats" by skeptical architects). Not an architect by training, Macris called on the advice of architects working for the department, and made recommendations to the appointed Planning Commission as to which two or three buildings merited approval.

The selection process has been ridiculed by architects and developers as a "beauty contest" conducted by the "taste police." Innovative designers, warned Allan Temko, the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s

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architecture critic, "can expect little mercy from the Torquemada of the architectural Inquisition, the planning director himself, assisted by the Post-Mod friars." The first contestants for Building of the Year added fuel to the critics' complaints, as developers anxious for approval attempted to appease the curious design dictates of the Planning Department. *All* entrants were rejected by the Planning Commission, after the developers had spent over a million dollars on designs and the byzantine permit process.

But there was more to the Downtown Plan than the bureaucratic pursuit of architectural mediocrity. Politicians and planners in San Francisco saw an opportunity to redistribute wealth and provide social services without requiring taxpayers to foot the bill. The plan became a Christmas tree laden with special-interest gifts, to be paid for by developers as the penalty for doing business in the city. Added to the office-building proposals were exactions for child care, public transit, and the provision of open space. Developers would be required to spend 1 percent of the building costs on art. One developer had to lease an entire floor to the San Francisco law or business library at a bargain rate, resulting in an estimated nine million dollars in lost revenue. The costliness of these exactions explains both the resentment they create in the business community and their political attraction in a city facing a large budget deficit.

The anti-growth movement

The Downtown Plan was the cornerstone of the new San Francisco, a city that was to be guided by the wisdom of the Planning Department. But the planners and politicians had helped to foster a movement hostile to growth, a movement they could no longer contain. Activist leaders saw the Downtown Plan as a betrayal of their vision of a better San Francisco, and they led the fight for a more severe measure, which was approved by the voters as Proposition M in November, 1986. Proposition M sliced the office construction cap to 475,000 square feet, resulting in a virtual freeze on new approvals. And the new ordinance required that any new development, however minor, meet a broad set of socioeconomic criteria.

Proposition M became a potent weapon for fighting any changes in the neighborhoods just as neighborhood activists were achieving new levels of political organization. Neighborhood watchdogs are not a new phenomenon, but their organizational skills, together with city ordinances, have given them particularly great political power in San Francisco. As one resident of the Richmond District

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told the *Chronicle*, "The people in the neighborhoods are wide awake now and won't stand being stepped on anymore." But the activists are not averse to infringing upon the rights of other property owners, and thwarting the realization of the hopes of those who want to move to San Francisco. They have gotten the Planning Department to create special zoning regulations for each neighborhood that forbid LULUs (locally unwanted land uses) such as banks and fast-food restaurants, and provide protection for existing businesses. That which is, is worshipped over that which can be; the results are some bizarre, if poetic, defenses of the status quo. "Even the topless joints are threatened," cried a local columnist in the *Chronicle*. "Sleazy sex establishments are a San Francisco tradition as old as the Barbary Coast; if we lose them, we lose our link with our rowdy Gold Rush past. And there will be only Burger Kings, and North Beach will be indistinguishable from Tulsa."

The future, let alone Tulsa, will not come to San Francisco, if anti-growth activists continue to gain political strength. A few residents in every neighborhood can find grounds for objecting to any project; they can use the endless public hearings, environmental reports, and other procedural hurdles to beat the opposition into submission. The regulatory process creates many opportunities for obstruction, and the anti-growth leaders are obstructionists *extraordinaire*. Planners have been swamped with requests for hearings on individual projects since the passage of Proposition M. "Pretty soon if you want to have a baby," lamented a city planner, "you'll need the consensus of your neighborhood."

Rarely is a significant development project approved without first surviving a ballot measure. Last December, a modest plan to create housing units for low-income elderly and handicapped residents was finally put on the public ballot and approved—yet another hurdle after three years of negotiations, hearings, and permit approvals. Art Agnos, the new Mayor, while anxious to see new housing made available, claimed that the referendum showed that some residents were still legitimately "upset because they have not been included in decisions that affect them." The notion that every resident has a right to participate directly in every decision that concerns him is turning every land-use permit review into a Cecil B. DeMille production, in which a cast of thousands participates in the pageant, but little is accomplished.

At the moment, the hottest potato in the overheated oven of San Francisco land-use politics is a moratorium on the demolition of single-family homes in outlying neighborhoods. Many residents

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have watched with despair as the wrecking balls knocked down homes. But the buildings have not come down to make way for, say, a toxic-waste dump; for the most part they have been replaced by more housing. A two-bedroom house, for example, might be replaced by a two-story, four-unit apartment building. Slowly the neighborhoods were changing, as a small step in the attempt to meet the desperate need for affordable housing. But hell hath no fury like a neighbor scorned, and residents have packed city board meetings to make their case. At a hearing last January, the raucous standing-room-only audience applauded and shouted its approval when a local realtor testified that the moratorium would be a boon to existing property owners, while a local builder's observation that the city is making a mockery of its commitment to affordable housing was met with silent indifference. City supervisors can count the potential votes of single-issue constituencies as well as other politicians, and the demolitions are on hold while the city places strict limits on replacement structures.

The erosion of the city of San Francisco into a collection of fiefdoms has been promoted by the skillful use of political rhetoric by activists opposed to growth. They have been able to depict their self-interest as public interest, and the domination of land-use politics by unaccountable elites as democracy. To understand how this curious state of affairs has arisen, it is helpful to look back at the evolution of land-use regulation.

Private property and political equality

To the founders of our government, private property was fundamental to republican democracy, and securing the possession of private property was regarded as a primary function of government. The duties of caring for property, and the interests shared by independent property owners, encouraged the self-reliance and social responsibility essential to mass participation in civic life. The security of property also safeguarded political independence: it provided a sphere of privacy that the government could not invade. Private property allowed the individual a means of livelihood independent of the government, and thus protected the citizen from economic reprisal for political criticism. Free expression and entrepreneurial creativity depended on private property, and were so closely linked as to be inseparable. "In its larger and juster meaning," wrote James Madison, property "embraces everything to which a man may attach a value and have a right, and which leaves to every one else the like advantage."

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"Which leaves to every one else the like advantage"—this is the crucial caveat in Madison's discussion of property. In the early days of the republic, with memories of colonial rule still fresh, government was seen as the greatest danger to equality. If men were given free rein to use their faculties, they could achieve a rough social and political equality. Government interference would replace natural equality with artificial inequality. The Jacksonian fear that America was creating its own political hierarchy, and the belief that any man was as fit as the next for government service, followed from the belief that individual liberty was the bulwark of political democracy.

Private property was not perceived as detrimental to political equality in the pre-industrial era, when there was little opportunity for the rapid accumulation of wealth. When the economy exploded in the nineteenth century, as a result of innovations in industry, communication, and transportation, entrepreneurial liberty was elevated into a civil religion. Property law reflected this change, as the courts created doctrines favoring the energetic use of property. But property was being transformed into forms far removed from the small homestead or business of the agrarian republic, and perceived abuses of property rights—pollution, harsh working conditions, and the creation of fantastic fortunes—opened the door for governmental regulation.

One form that such regulation took was zoning, a legacy of the Progressive movement's belief in the virtue of centralized control by wise administrators. Zoning was a departure from the principles of the American liberal tradition. The preferences of individuals and the best uses for property were no longer "discovered" through private negotiations and contracts, but instead were prescribed in advance. Zoning regulations explicitly proclaimed what a property owner in a particular district was forbidden to do. Zoning decreed a legal separation of uses, representing a hierarchy of values, in which industry, commerce, and housing each had its place. And zoning introduced centralized control to land-use decisionmaking, albeit in a peculiarly American fashion. Suspicious of a distant central government, Americans looked to local governments for land-use control.

During America's Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, institutionalized power of any sort became the subject of suspicion. Land-use regulators were increasingly denounced for being beholden, not to the enlightened public interest, but to wealthy manipulative developers. Courts began to scrutinize regulatory decisions more closely, and to require more formal, open processes; this trend was mirrored

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in state statutory reforms. The environmental movement produced the National Environmental Policy Act, requiring unprecedented levels of detail about every imaginable impact of a government land-use project. Many states enacted comparable legislation, as well as a slew of companion bills protecting resources such as wetlands and agricultural lands, and prescribing housing guidelines. Local governments were required to produce extraordinary levels of information about land-use proposals even as they were being pushed to allow greater public involvement. The result has been a land-use dispute process that is complex, costly, unpredictable, and exhausting.

In California, thanks in part to "creative" decisionmaking by the State Supreme Court, environmental-impact analysis has become a major weapon for sidetracking any substantial public or private land-use proposal. Years of hearings and litigation can be devoted to the environmental-impact report alone, before permit boards even begin to consider a project. For example, biochemical research at the University of California's laboratory in the Laurel Hills neighborhood cannot continue until the State Supreme Court considers the adequacy of the environmental-impact report on the University's plan to expand use of the facility. The delays are expensive for those who would benefit from the activities, but they are costless victories for opponents of change. The longer and more costly the process, the more the process itself becomes a victory for no-growth activists.

Activists have been able to take advantage of democratic disillusionment with centralized regulation to argue that the "open" process allows the will of the "people" to be heard and acted upon. But the "people" do not participate in land-use hearings or follow the twists and turns as a project winds its way through a labyrinth of governmental agencies and courts. Most people have other things to do—such as going to work each morning—while the activists and developers are plotting their strategies. Even where there is great interest in a land-use proposal, it takes special skills, an inordinate amount of time, and Herculean determination to wade through the testimony and documentation, and to participate in the hearings and board meetings.

The shift toward participatory politics and away from representative politics liberates the participants from the constraints of representation. In the "open" process favored by the activists, only the most committed participate, while the rights and interests of other citizens are ignored.

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The Agnos administration

The recent election of Art Agnos as Mayor offers little hope that the land-use review process will cease to be a public inquisition. The more extreme views of "Red" Art, such as his opposition to hosting the Summer Olympics in 1996, worry some San Franciscans. But Agnos has impressed political observers of various ideological stripes with his sincerity and commitment to the city. His informal manner may be a welcome change from the more regal style of Mayor Feinstein, if he can keep his administration from descending into chaos. The enthusiasm with which Agnos advocated tightening rent control, prohibiting demolitions, and possibly raising business taxes sent business leaders scurrying to support his opponents in the mayoral race. But in victory Agnos has professed a willingness to work with business, and there have been signs of cooperation. The Mayor has pledged to streamline the land-use permit process and remove obstacles to the construction of affordable housing.

The Mayor's most earnest plans may be thwarted by the NIMBYs (those who cry, "Not in my backyard!"), who carry great clout in the regulatory-review process. For even as he pledges to get things done, Agnos is helping to increase the influence of obstructionists. The Mayor has demanded the resignations of every member of every city commission, including the Planning Commission. But rather than using the opportunity to appoint like-minded individuals who might be able to forge the strong consensus needed to overcome opposition to projects, Agnos is diffusing power even more. The Mayor has appointed a fifty-member "Citizens Committee on Commissions" to make recommendations for appointments. The list of members is a "Who's Who" of leaders of liberal special-interest and neighborhood groups, including co-chair Esther Marks, who is active in the anti-growth movement, and Dick Grosball, of San Franciscans for Reasonable Growth, which heads the assault on development. Conspicuously absent are representatives of the downtown business community. The group will work mightily over the next few months to produce appropriate nominees, but there is little likelihood the chosen few will be able—or even willing—to reform the regulatory review process.

No-growth activists and tenants' groups have been seeking to extend their influence over the Board of Supervisors. They sought voter approval for a plan to make individual board members accountable only to their own neighborhoods, rather than to the city at large. The district-election plan was opposed by an unusual coali-

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tion of business leaders, Republicans, blacks, and Asians, who feared that neighborhood domination would dry up growth entirely and undermine the influence of political and racial minorities. (San Francisco is known for its diversity of ethnic groups and distinctive lifestyles; even a few Republicans can be found.) The initiative failed, but the anti-growth movement sent a message to the supervisors that they must either cooperate or face stiff opposition.

The opponents of change are gaining power through an unrepresentative system disguised as democracy, and passing off their self-interest as community good. "Community," like democracy, is a politically fashionable word, and its capture by the no-growth forces is another rhetorical coup. For who can oppose community? If it's good for the community, good for the neighborhood, then it is good for San Francisco. Or is it?

Even if we assume that the citizens who mark the hearing dates on their calendars and wade through the tortured English in the permit applications and reviews speak for the majority of the residents in their neighborhoods, there are several interests whose voices are not heard. First, there are the occasional property owners who may want to do more with their property than watch the petunias grow. It is not written in stone—and may in fact be dangerous to liberal democracy—that their rights must be subjugated to community preferences. But given the lenient attitude of the California courts, constitutional rights have rarely proven to be serious obstacles to regulators and activists. Furthermore, even as a matter of public policy, the interests of the neighborhoods may not always coincide with the interests of the city as a whole. The need for jobs, housing, and services is citywide, yet influence over crucial decisions is increasingly centered in neighborhoods.

Often forgotten in San Francisco politics are the needs of citizens outside the city gates. San Francisco is still the economic hub of the Bay Area, and attracts would-be residents from distant parts of the country. Many commuting workers who endure the tedious trip to and from San Francisco would love to live within the hallowed confines of the city. But increasingly, those who arrived in San Francisco on an early boat or subway have been erecting regulatory obstacles to latecomers. Bradley Inman, perhaps the most perceptive commentator on the local housing scene, has said of Mayor Agnos: "He is quick to point out that his soul is with the neighborhoods. But in some cases neighborhood leaders with the most clout are the franchised housing-haves who veto decisions that may aid the housing have-nots."

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Neighborhood activists also adopt the appealing rhetoric of environmentalism. But environmentalism can easily become a screen for exclusion. If I say, "Those people may not live in my neighborhood because they are not good enough," I might be regarded as self-interested—or even a racist. But if I say, "We wish we could accommodate more growth in our lovely neighborhood, but it would exceed the ecological carrying capacity of the neighborhood and cause severe environmental degradation," I would probably be congratulated for my social concern. Neighborhood leaders emphasize that they seek to protect environmental quality, not social or racial purity. This may be open to question: thus the leaders of the Asian community in San Francisco suspect that the hysteria over additional housing in the outlying neighborhoods may be motivated in part by fears that large Asian families may move into the new units. But the anti-growth activists have succeeded in framing the debate in their own terms; they have managed to portray their opponents, the owners and builders who wish to create new housing and business opportunities, as greedy businessmen who are out to destroy the city. The fight to stop demolitions in the Richmond district, according to Bradley Inman, "was packaged as bad-guy developers vs. San Francisco's quality of life. When that's the choice, most political leaders will choose the side of the angels. That isn't the group that wants to bulldoze and put new sticks in the ground."

Anti-Federalism in San Francisco

The breakdown of San Francisco politics into neighborhood squabbles recalls the political thought of the Anti-Federalists. While the Federalists argued that an extended republic was necessary to secure self-government, the Anti-Federalists believed that democracy must be rooted in a small community. By participating in civic life, citizens would learn their responsibilities to the polity as well as their rights, and government would be responsive because the leaders would share the concerns of the led. The homogeneous community, the Anti-Federalists believed, would inculcate virtue, and help douse the flames of faction.

The Federalists, in contrast, believed that democratic government in small, homogeneous communities was vulnerable to capture by parochial interests inimical to the larger public interest, and to the individual rights of citizens. The solution would be a larger territory and more diverse population, the hope being that the various "factions" would act as a check on each other, that interest

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groups would, in effect, "cancel each other out," and increase the likelihood that the common good would emerge.

The lessons of the Federalists are being forgotten in San Francisco. The detrimental effects of change are real, but cushioning the blows while accommodating the pressures of growth on the city and the region will require vigorous leadership. In an earnest attempt to democratize the regulatory process, city officials and voters are making the process more vulnerable to capture by narrow interests. Anti-Federalism is running amok in the neighborhoods of San Francisco.

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Is art such a good investment?

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THE DEMAND for art today is higher than ever before. Auction houses report record turnovers, and absolute top prices are being paid in increasingly rapid sequence. Only three years ago, Turner's "Seascape: Folkestone" had an auction price of $9.8 million at Sotheby's (London). A year later van Gogh's "Landscape with Rising Sun" was sold for $9.9 million at Sotheby's (New York), and Mantegna's "Adoration of the Magi" sold at Christie's (London) for $10.4 million. Enormous publicity greeted the sale in April 1987 of van Gogh's "Sunflowers," which was sold at Christie's (London) to the Japanese insurance company Yasuda for $39.9 million.

In 1907, seventeen years after van Gogh's death, "Sunflowers" was offered at an exhibition in Mannheim for 12,000 German marks (roughly $3,000). Two years later, again in Mannheim, it was offered for 28,000 marks (roughly $7,000). Edith Beatty is said to have acquired it in 1934 for 63,000 marks (about $24,000) from the Parisian art dealer Paul Rosenberg. After the deduction of all costs involved, the investment of 63,000 marks yielded a yearly rate of return of 11.4 percent. This return is far above the rate of inflation, which was approximately 6.7 percent per year during that period.

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The real rate of return of 4.7 percent per year is also higher than the return from other kinds of financial investment—in securities, for example.

The current auction record was set in November 1987, again by a van Gogh; "Irises," sold by Sotheby's (New York), fetched a price of $53.9 million (including Sotheby's 10 percent commission). The painting was bought by the seller's mother in 1947 for $84,000, less than half a million dollars in today's money; the real rate of return on the investment comes to about 12 percent per year.

In view of statistics such as these, it is hardly surprising that investing in painting is thought to be highly profitable. Especially in the United States, an increasing number of investors believe that purchasing art provides not only aesthetic pleasure, but also financial remuneration. American banks strengthen the trend of viewing art as an investment by hiring "art investment counselors," which suggests that it pays to buy art. While similar tendencies can also be seen in financial circles in Europe, art lovers and investment advisors there are more hesitant. Many warn that art objects should not be bought with portfolio diversification in mind. Most art collectors share this feeling, arguing that art should be owned for aesthetic rather than financial reasons.

Risk and rate of return

Who is right? Does investment in art really yield a higher rate of return than comparable forms of investment? Should paintings be bought for financial reasons?

These questions are not easy to answer. There is little data available on the actual selling prices of art in galleries and through art dealers. A consistent series of data exists only for prices reached at auctions. However, such prices are quite important, since they give an indication of the prices asked by art dealers.

The financial profitability of buying paintings depends both on the average rate of return and on risk. The rate of return is calculated on the basis of the difference between the sale price that was received and the initial buying price that was paid by the painting's owner. The financial risk of investing in art is captured by the fluctuations in paintings' rates of return. *Actual* risk, however, is higher, since paintings are occasionally stolen, mutilated, or even destroyed. To this risk must be added the uncertainty stemming from the possibility of forgery or mistaken attribution. Changes in attribution usually make a big impact on prices. An example is Rubens's "Daniel in the Lions' Den," which in 1882 was auctioned by Christie's

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(London) for 1,680 pounds, and in 1885 was resold for 2,520 pounds. In 1963, now attributed to Jacob Jordaens, it was auctioned for only 500 pounds. But in 1965, acknowledged as a "school piece of Rubens's," it was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum for 178,600 pounds. Even uncritical buyers may begin to wonder when they learn that there are believed to be 8,000 paintings by Corot in the United States—an astonishing number, considering that there are only 3,000 authentic works by that master. Other sources estimate that the number of fake Corots is as high as 10,000. The situation is similar with various other painters, in particular van Dyck and Utrillo.

Art historian Gerald Reitlinger, author of the three-volume *The Economics of Taste*, has collected auction prices for paintings over more than three centuries; he considers only important works of the best-known painters of the world, concentrating on auctions in London, and later also in New York (mostly at Sotheby's and Christie's). We have extended Reitlinger's data up to 1987, and have included auction data from France, Germany, and the Netherlands. As there is a consensus that short-run speculation in art is financially unprofitable (partly due to the high commission fees and other transaction costs connected with auctions), we consider only holding periods of twenty years or more between the purchase and sale of a picture. The number of turnovers included in our calculation is 1,200. We have adjusted the prices for inflation, and taken into account the considerable transaction costs, which vary according to period, country, and auction house: a typical auction fee would amount to more than 10% of the value for both the buyer and the seller.

According to our calculations, the average real rate of return for investment in paintings amounts to 1.5 percent per year for the period 1635 to 1987. As a comparison, an investor holding the best securities, such as government securities, would have enjoyed a long-term real rate of return of a little more than 3 percent per year. Thus, an investor in paintings (as opposed to financial assets) would have incurred a real opportunity cost of somewhat less than 2 percent a year. This is a sizable amount: the real rate of return on paintings is half the return on public securities.

It might, admittedly, be argued that financially-motivated investment in art began on a large scale only after World War II; for this reason we have calculated the rate of return both before and after 1950. The real rate of return for the period 1635 to 1949 amounts to 1.4 percent per year. This rate of return is clearly lower

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than the corresponding real return on government securities, which would be about 3.3 percent per year. A representative investor in paintings would thus have suffered a real opportunity cost of nearly 2 percentage points by not investing in public securities in the period before 1950.

From 1950 to 1987 the real rate of return on paintings was 1.6 percent per year. An investor in financial assets in this period would have reaped a real return of almost 2.5 percent per year. In this more recent period the representative investor in art would thus have incurred a real opportunity cost of a little more than half a percent per year. The main reason why investments in paintings have become *relatively* more attractive than those in financial assets (the opportunity cost having fallen from 2 to .5 percent) is not so much an increase in the real return on paintings as an increase in the rate of inflation—which rose from .5 percent per year before 1950 to over 5 percent per year after 1950, and which has not been fully reflected in the nominal rates of interest on long-term credits. As a result, investments in long-term credits have become less attractive (the real return falling from 3.3 to 2.3 percent per year). A lower rate of inflation would produce the opposite effect: if in the future inflation returned to pre-1950 levels, investors in paintings (as opposed to financial instruments) would presumably incur even higher real opportunity costs than they do today.

The real rates of return on investments in paintings that we have calculated are actually too high. For the owner of a valuable painting incurs additional expenses that an investor in financial assets does not face: to preserve the painting's value, air conditioning must often be installed; if the painting is not kept in a bank vault it must be insured against destruction by fire, mutilation, or theft. According to the International Foundation of Art Research, in the last decade, in which nominal prices of paintings have increased sharply, art thefts have tripled; but only 5 percent of stolen paintings are now recovered—as compared with 22 percent ten years ago. Accordingly, the cost of insurance against fire and theft has gone up and now ranges between .2 percent and 1 percent of a painting's appraised value per year.

Not only are the rates of return on art investment surprisingly small; they also fluctuate widely. In the post-war period the average real rates of return ranged from -19 percent to $+16$ percent; for the period 1635-1949 they ranged from -16 to $+26$ percent. In real terms, nearly a third of all transactions resulted in an absolute loss. For more than half the transactions (55 percent), the profit-

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ability was lower than would have been the case had one invested in public securities. Similar results characterize the period before 1950. In both periods the volatility of the rates of return for paintings exceeded that for financial assets.

Winners and losers

The average results may be illustrated by referring to some individual paintings and painters. Who are the big winners and losers? The highest real rate of return (above 26 percent per year) in our sample was reached by Frans Hals's "Man in Black," which in 1885 was auctioned for a little more than 5 pounds at Christie's (London), and in 1913 sold for 9,000 pounds at Sotheby's (London). Other pictures by Hals have achieved real rates of return of approximately 10 percent in the last two centuries. Similarly high rates of return could have been realized by investors in paintings by well-known artists like Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Manet, Matisse, Monet, and Renoir. Even with these famous painters, however, some transactions have resulted in low, and sometimes even negative, real rates of return.

The worst investment revealed in our sample is John Singer Sargent's oil sketch "San Virgilio," which in 1925 was sold for 7,350 pounds but in 1952 was auctioned for only 105 pounds at Christie's (London). The real rate of return to the unfortunate owner was −19.3 percent per year. Other painters who produced works that were sold at great real financial loss include Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Carlo Crivelli, John Hoppner, William H. Hunt, Sir Edwin Landseer, Frederick Lord Leighton, Sir John Millais, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and David Roberts. Not surprisingly, most of these painters are not generally known among today's art lovers, because their art went out of fashion. Some of these artists, however, have met with increasing interest recently, so their works have produced positive real rates of return in the last few years.

Empirical studies

Our study analyzes the financial returns on art investment in the past. In principle, it is of course possible that the future will be completely different. The evidence at hand, however, provides no indication that investment in art will yield high monetary profits in the future, everything else being equal.

Our results correspond well with those of the few serious studies undertaken so far. The economist William Baumol, who is both a professor at Princeton and New York Universities and a practicing

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artist, has studied the price changes of pictures that have changed hands at least twice between 1652 and 1960, utilizing Reitlinger's restricted data set. The real rate of return on paintings that he calculates for this period is .6 percent per year. The corresponding real rate of return for government securities amounts to 2.5 percent per year. A representative investor would therefore have experienced a loss of nearly 2 percent per year. Like us, Baumol finds that investments in paintings generate highly unstable rates of return. On average, the real rates of return ranged between −19 percent and +27 percent per year. In 40 percent of all transactions there was an absolute loss in real terms, while 60 percent of all transactions yielded a rate of return lower than that received from government securities.

Another study, by Robert Anderson, which examines the 1960s and considers additional sources of data, concludes that the average *nominal* rate of return is 3.3 percent per year, which is roughly half as high as the return on financial assets. The standard deviations of the rates of return (a common measure of financial risk) on the two assets, paintings and stocks, are 56 percent and 12 percent, respectively.

A third study, by John Stein, concentrates on auctions held in the United States and Great Britain between 1946 and 1968. He finds that the *nominal* rate of return on paintings is 10.5 percent per year, compared with a 14.3 percent rate for financial assets in the same period. In real terms, a representative investor in art would have lost 1.6 percent per year. Stein, too, shows that the prices of paintings fluctuate much more than prices of financial assets, which suggests that art investment is riskier than investment in financial assets.

The three studies mentioned, as well as our own (which takes into account longer time periods and a larger number of transactions), all come to the same conclusion: investment in paintings is less profitable and more risky than investment in traditional financial assets.

The unpredictability of fashions

A careful analysis of the long-term evolution of the prices of paintings suggests that the changes in price can be understood as a random process. The long-run real rate of return on investments in paintings cannot be attributed to any systematic or identifiable factors.

Our finding that the changes in the prices of paintings tend to result from random influences allows us to draw two conclusions:

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(1) The alteration in price and the rate of return of a painting *cannot* be predicted.

(2) Information and specific knowledge about the market for art in general, and about any paintings in particular, does *not* allow an individual, on average, to reap higher rates of return than he might have if the paintings had been bought without special knowledge. It follows that art experts are not, on average, able to invest more successfully in the art market, their superior knowledge and experience notwithstanding. The price movements that in retrospect are termed "fashions" are not predictable even by art experts, and therefore cannot be anticipated and exploited systematically.

There are many examples that support these findings: Vermeer was held in low regard for a long time, and his paintings accordingly fetched low prices; today his paintings are among the world's most expensive. The same can be said of El Greco. Turner's paintings at first were sold at very high prices; then the prices fell sharply. Today his paintings fetch record prices. Similar price movements characterize Pre-Raphaelite paintings, which are becoming increasingly popular. Conversely, there are many artists who were previously highly esteemed, but nowadays are little known, such as van Ostade, Berchem, and Wouvermans. Alma-Tadema also comes to mind: his works were initially highly priced, but by the time of his death in 1913 the prices of his paintings had been falling for a decade. The decline in price could hardly have been steeper: in 1960 one of his most famous paintings could not find a buyer at 5 percent of the price paid in 1904. Art experts are, of course, able to provide explanations for such dramatic price falls *in retrospect*; they cannot, however, predict which fashions will begin and end.

The fact that there are *collections* that have greatly increased in value does not invalidate our point. One such collection is that of the Swiss textile producer Hans Mettler, which was auctioned by Christie's (London) in 1979 for thirty-four times the value of the capital invested between 1915 and 1929. To begin with, the rate of return on the collection as a whole is not all that high. While the nominal rate of return amounts to 6.4 percent per year, the real rate of return is only 2 percent, which is lower than the average return in financial markets. But even if the profitability of a particular collection is higher than that of financial assets, it fails to provide a valid objection to our thesis, since existing collections constitute a positive selection. To get an accurate picture it would also be necessary to consider collectors who were not successful, and who therefore had to dispose of their collections.

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That price movements are random does not, of course, imply that no investors make large profits by buying paintings. But it is equally true that some investors suffer huge losses. One who bought a Vermeer or a Pre-Raphaelite when it was out of fashion can sell at a profit today; but one who bought a Berchem, van Ostade, or Alma-Tadema in the past, and sells it today, incurs a severe loss. The important point is that winners and losers are apparent only in hindsight; successes and failures cannot be attributed to identifiable causes, and therefore cannot be predicted.

Those who aspire to make a killing in the art market should ask themselves the following questions: Why exactly should this market alone provide extraordinarily large profits? If many paintings are financially undervalued today, why don't other investors realize this, and then buy, pushing up current prices? This question is particularly relevant today, when art investment is in vogue, and when investors are well informed about market conditions. There is an obvious analogy with investments in the stock and securities markets: if someone is sure that a financial asset's price will increase, he will buy it and thereby push up the price until all unusual profit opportunities are exhausted.

Predictions of high profits in the market for art—particularly for paintings—are mistaken. Theoretical arguments, as well as all serious empirical studies, indicate that it is no easier to make speculative financial profits in art than anywhere else.

Are these conclusions disappointing? We think not. Art should be bought for enjoyment, because people derive intrinsic benefits from its possession. For buyers like these, investing in art is always profitable. In our view, it is reassuring that objects of art are more likely to provide aesthetic than financial satisfaction.[1]

[1] We are grateful to Elisabeth Tester, Marina Börkey, Cornelia Haist, Antonia Simon, Kai Fürntratt, and Alexander Schrader for their research assistance and comments.

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SPRING BOOKS

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Some Elites are More Equal than Others

JAMES Q. WILSON

Sidney Verba, with Steven Kelman, Gary R. Orren, Ichiro Miyake, Joji Watanuki, Ikuo Kabashima, and G. Donald Ferree, Jr.: Elites and the Idea of Equality. *Harvard University Press. 352 pp. $30.00.*

THE TRADITIONAL OBJECTION to democracy was that it would enable the many to exploit the few. To its early critics, democratic rule meant mob rule. Citizens would have equal votes but unequal wealth. Allowing all citizens to participate in passing laws would permit the many poor people to take wealth from the few rich people. To put it more formally, as long as the income of the median voter was less than that of the average voter, there would be a majority of voters who could add to their incomes by taxing away the "surplus" incomes of the minority.

Rational, self-interested voters would use politics to improve their lot. This would be true even of calmly rational voters; matters would become worse if, as critics of democracy feared, citizens were easily duped by demagogues arousing the passions of the people with appeals to class hatred and the delights of the quick buck. To prevent this, one had to hope that most citizens would resist such appeals and take the long view of their own interests by, for example, recognizing the economic value of the higher rates of saving and investment characteristic of affluent people, or looking forward to the time when humble people might enter the ranks of the prosperous. But such hopes, viewed coldly, seemed far-fetched: Why should anybody favor a distant abstraction ("high savings rates will be good for the economy") over an immediate gain ("cash subsidies are good for me"), or discount the future to such a slight degree that he or she would endure the prospect of years of low incomes in exchange for a small chance of a high income later on?

In the United States, however, democracy has not led to wholesale expropriation. There has been some income transfer (scholars disagree as to how much), but the distribution of after-tax and after-benefit incomes is almost as unequal as the distribution of pre-

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tax, pre-benefit incomes. In the last decade we have seen Congress lower the top marginal federal income-tax rate from 70 percent to 28 percent. The tax cut of 1981 was supported by eighty-nine Senators, including almost all of the Democrats. National health insurance has not come close to passage. The amount of wealth that can escape the federal estate tax has been sharply increased. Social Security and Medicare benefits are available to both David Rockefeller and the widow Gonzalez. There are plenty of programs that distribute money to special-interest groups, but remarkably few that redistribute it among classes.

How could those people who were pessimistic about the prospects for decent democratic government in the United States have been so wrong? One reason is that some of them acted on their fears and designed a constitutional system that would make it difficult to engage in class-based, expropriative policymaking. The limitations on the powers of the national government made it all but impossible to transfer much wealth until well into this century. Congress was given no explicit powers to transfer wealth and, at least in the opinion of the Supreme Court, no authority to levy a personal income tax. The separation of powers inhibited the formation of legislative majorities responsive to temporary popular passions.

But many of these constitutional limitations have all but disappeared. The Supreme Court has broadly interpreted Congress's power to regulate interstate commerce so as to justify Congress's adoption of almost any economic policy. The Sixteenth Amendment, ratified in 1913, authorizes a federal income tax. The separation of powers still makes it difficult to pass major new legislative initiatives, but that difficulty can on occasion be easily overcome, as we saw in the early 1930s and the mid-1960s when liberal Democrats had a majority of the seats in the House and Senate. And yet redistributionist politics is still conspicuous by its absence.

In an important new book, Harvard Professor Sidney Verba and his colleagues provide part of the answer to this puzzle. They interviewed the members of key political and economic elites in Japan, Sweden, and the United States to find out what they thought the income distribution in their own country was and what they believed it should be. These three countries are of special interest because they differ so sharply in the degree of income inequality and in their domestic political arrangements.

SWEDEN indisputably has one of the least unequal income distributions in the free world. Among a dozen nations that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Sweden ranks first on an index of post-tax income equality; the United States ranks ninth. (Japan is in between.) These differences are in large measure the result of government policy. The people in the top fifth of the income distribution in Sweden and the United States earn about the same share—roughly 47 percent

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—of the total national income, before taxes and government transfer payments. But *after* taxes and transfers, the income share of the top fifth falls to about 36 percent in Sweden but only 46 percent in the United States. Japan is like the United States in that government policy does not affect the income distribution very much, but unlike the United States in that the pre-tax, pre-transfer income distribution is somewhat more equal.

There are several reasons why income distributions differ among nations. Individual differences in talent and temperament exist that will invariably result in differences in productivity, and thus in earnings and wealth, everywhere—except, perhaps, in a few small, utopian communities. These individual characteristics may themselves be distributed differently across cultural and ethnic groups, so that the amount earned by the lowest income group in one place may be higher than the amount earned by the lowest income group in another, regardless of government policy. The Japanese have a higher average IQ score than white Americans and they also differ in certain personality traits (which, like IQ, are in part the result of heredity). Even modest differences in average scores can produce large differences at the tails of the distribution, so it is possible that the reason the lowest fifth of the Japanese earn a larger share of their nation's income than do the lowest fifth in Sweden and America has something to do with the talent and industry of the least advantaged Japanese. To put it technically, if the standard deviation of individual productivity measures is lower in one country than in another, earnings will be more equal in the former nation than in the latter. Verba and his collaborators do not examine this possibility.

But they do mention other possibilities. Market forces may make a large difference. The structure of industry, the demand for labor of various kinds, and the position of each nation in the international economy will no doubt influence income distributions as well as the average level of prosperity. Political organizations also make a difference: the Swedes have been governed by a social-democratic party that, except for one brief period in the late 1970s, has been in office continuously for many decades. The United States does not even have a significant socialist or social-democratic party, and the Japanese have kept the relatively conservative Liberal Party in office since the end of the Occupation. Moreover, the historically weak state in America has made it hard (until recently) to even think seriously about income redistribution. In Sweden, by contrast, the state has always been powerful; government officials could, with relatively few constraints, think seriously about almost any policy. When the Social Democrats came to power, they found an elaborate state machinery at their disposal and encountered a populace accustomed to deferring to state rule.

The last fact is especially ironic, for it implies that nations in which the political system is strongly hierarchical (and thus where

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there is a great deal of political inequality) will be most likely to adopt policies furthering economic equality. If the U.S.-Sweden comparison is of general significance, then egalitarians face some tough choices—the more participative and politically egalitarian nation, the United States, produces policies that are economically less egalitarian than those produced by the more hierarchical, non-participative nation, Sweden.

But the focus of the book is on the role of values in explaining distributional differences. Verba and his co-authors make a convincing case that the U.S. income distribution is as it is in large part because that is the way political elites—even relatively leftist ones—prefer it to be.

THE KEY findings are in Chapter 6. There the authors present the estimates made by their elite respondents of what the income distribution actually is and the beliefs of those respondents as to what it ought to be. When asked whether they agree that in a fair economic system people would earn about the same, the leaders of feminist, black, labor, and Democratic party organizations in the United States are much more likely to say no than are Social Democrats and labor leaders in Sweden. As Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter had previously found in their study of political elites in this country, liberals here tend to believe that earnings should reflect individual ability. In Sweden, only conservatives and business leaders believe that.

To nail this down, Verba et al. asked each respondent to state how much money a person in each of several common occupations in fact earns, and how much that person should earn. Somewhat surprisingly, the estimates of earnings for particular occupations were reasonably accurate. Political elites have a good sense of how much money professors, auto workers, school teachers, bank tellers, and police officers actually earn. In all three nations, the respondents underestimated the actual earnings of top corporate executives, but given the difficulty of defining exactly what constitutes a "top corporate executive," that is probably to be expected. (In all three nations, they overestimated the actual earnings of doctors.)

When asked what people in these occupations *should* earn, respondents in Japan and the United States tended to say that the highest income groups should earn less (the recommended cuts for doctors were particularly severe); in Sweden, on the other hand, respondents thought that many high-ranking occupations—business executive, doctor, cabinet secretary—should earn more. But the recommended increases were not, on the whole, very large. In all three countries people thought that those in low-ranking occupations should earn more.

The key response had to do with what the respondents regarded as a fair income disparity between two very different occupations—

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a business executive and either an auto worker or an unskilled laborer (elevator operator or dishwasher). The authors show this as the ratio between a "fair" income for one occupation and a "fair" income for the other.

In the United States, most elite respondents thought that business executives should earn at least seven times as much money as an auto worker and at least ten times as much money as an elevator operator. In Sweden, most respondents thought that the business executive should earn less than three times as much as an auto worker or a dishwasher.

The differences are even more dramatic when one examines the responses of particular elite groups. Black and feminist leaders in the United States are, to judge from their views on other matters, the most liberal political elites in the country. But they supported a greater income disparity than did *conservative* party leaders or business executives in Sweden. An American feminist, intellectual, or civil-rights leader thinks that the ratio between the earnings of a business executive and an unskilled worker ought to be between eight and twelve to one, while a conservative party or business leader in Sweden thinks that the ratio should be only about three or four to one. There is simply no overlap between the elites in the two nations. The most conservative elites in Sweden have more egalitarian views about income than the most liberal elites in the United States. (Japan is closer to the American than to the Swedish case.)

What Swedish elites are endorsing is something very close to the actual income distribution in that country. The post-tax income of the executive of a large corporation is in fact about twice the post-tax income of a dishwasher. A member of parliament earns about the same as a television repairman who owns his own small business. What American elites are endorsing is something that looks like the actual U.S. income distribution, where top executives earn about thirty-five times as much as an elevator operator. In both countries, elites would change the distribution a bit: in the U.S., most elite respondents would lower executive salaries somewhat; in Sweden most would increase them somewhat. (Swedish business leaders would increase them significantly).

In their chapters on the history of redistributive politics in the three countries, the authors show how these values have shaped the public debate. In the United States, the individualistic ethos has always supported wide income disparities (provided they reflected actual differences in talent and effort); as a result, redistributionist policies have never been on the political agenda. In Sweden, a very different ethos has consistently supported income levelling, even when the conservatives were in power; redistribution has always been at the heart of that country's agenda.

At the same time, policies have no doubt shaped values. The existence of redistributive politics in Sweden has accustomed Swedes

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to its assumptions and consequences; the absence of such politics in the U.S. has accustomed Americans to the desirability of an individualistic creed. Which came first, values or policies, is a question Verba and his colleagues do not try to answer.

ONE CAN QUIBBLE with some of their assertions and evidence. It is not clear how much confidence one should have in data based on a mail questionnaire to which only about half the addressees responded. (The response rate was especially low in Japan.) It is not clear what significance one should attach to the fact that the researchers studied real and perceived differences in earnings rather than wealth. Above all, a book that relies almost entirely on survey data is a bit arid—one would like to read about the actual workings of redistributionist policies and learn more about their political origins, the methods by which they are implemented, and the means by which people (especially in Sweden, the "vanguard welfare state") try to evade politically-directed income controls.

For example, it would be interesting to have data that cashed out the value of the many perks enjoyed by the Swedish and Japanese elites, perks that are so numerous and generous that they may well moderate any strong demands for greater cash incomes (especially in Sweden, a nation with very high marginal tax rates). Why ask for higher pay, which is taxed, when one can get perks that enable one to command the same resources, untaxed? Swedish executives, journalists, and party functionaries appear to have far more generous expense accounts than those available to their American counterparts. My naturally suspicious mind leads me to believe that no matter what the schemes of social engineers, clever people will find ways of doing well for themselves.

But even allowing for all these quibbles, the Swedish-American contrasts are so startling that I think it unlikely that they can be explained away. Swedes to whom I have spoken confirm that income differences are, indeed, very narrow, even after allowing for perks. But Sweden is at the same time a highly stratified society, with wide cleavages associated with social class and political power. Verba and his colleagues have done a fine job of gathering and analyzing data that call seriously into question both the Marxist view that bourgeois societies will inevitably tolerate great income differences and the Tory fear that democracy will inevitably lead to levelling and expropriation. For their next book, I hope they take their cue from Max Weber and examine what "equality" and "inequality" mean in terms of power, status, and spirit. Swedes have got the income distribution that most of them want. Do they also want the bureaucracy, corporatist politics, and paternalistic social engineering that go along with it?

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Where Bias and Influence Meet

AARON WILDAVSKY

Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder: **News That Matters: Television and American Opinion.** *University of Chicago Press. 200 pp. $19.95.*

OF THE THREE GREAT QUESTIONS about the influence of the major media upon political opinion—Is there a systematic media bias? If so, in what direction does it flow? Is public opinion strongly influenced by the media?—the last is arguably the most important. For if opinion is not much influenced by the way the media report the news (or determine what is news), the prior questions about the extent and direction of bias are, in political life at least, irrelevant.

News That Matters does matter, because it demonstrates conclusively that television newscasts powerfully affect opinion. The ingenious way in which Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder persuade us to accept their thesis makes their joint work the leading book in its field. All that follows, whether it supports, modifies, or challenges their conclusions, will have to begin here.

It is important to realize that until recently the prevailing wisdom was that television news has only a weak and fleeting influence upon opinion. Television news was assumed to be too brief, too scattered, too visual (as opposed to cerebral) to influence opinion. Following upon older studies of newspaper influence, where editorials appeared unread and news stories too complex, there appeared little point in worrying about media that had trouble holding people's attention, let alone persuading them to change their views. Forgotten were Walter Lippmann's 1920s caution about the media's ability to influence what people take to be important (which Iyengar and Kinder call "priming") and Bernard Cohen's seminal *The Press and Foreign Policy*, in which he argues that the press "is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*." But how, amidst rival speculations about whether television news affects public opinion, when each hunch is plausible to its holders, is evidence to be brought to bear so as to arrive at a persuasive conclusion?

Surveys of the general population and selected groups have their uses. They can tell us about the kinds of people who hold certain views and test plausible guesses about why they hold them. The variety of possible influences is so great, however, that it is difficult to establish causality. It is not easy to say exactly how a person surveyed was exposed to the stories in question, whether or not other factors intervened, how changing the time or the person or the story's presentation would affect the result, or what to do if one wishes to study television coverage of energy, when television coverage is exclusively about poverty. Experiments, the authors' chosen

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method, overcome these handicaps, by allowing for control over exposure and exposee. We will not know how successful their method is until critical studies have appeared.

Iyengar and Kinder's genius, as I see it, consists of figuring out how to expose hand-picked audiences to selected television news broadcasts without permitting the viewers to know that the news was "cooked." By going over news from the same channels on the same subjects they wanted to cover from the past two years, they were able to carefully splice them in without arousing suspicion. One more thing: patience, energy, and frustration-tolerance play a vital part in their fourteen experiments. They continually revised the experiments, devising new ways to learn about phenomena they later realized were important but had not programmed in at the start. A willingness to accept the lack of perfect foresight is needed by the compleat researcher. So is a willingness to supplement one's preferred method with others (the authors use surveys where helpful), a good example of methodological pluralism. What have they found that is so important?

THE FIRST FINDING the authors rightly term "the *agenda-setting hypothesis: those problems that receive prominent attention on the national news become the problems the viewing public regards as the nation's most important.*" First, small groups of adult participants in New Haven and Ann Arbor were selected and exposed to pre-prepared television newscasts. Before and after this controlled exposure, their beliefs about the importance of national policy problems were measured. The social and economic status and demographic characteristics of the participants are shown to be equivalent. A typical table reveals the results:

Table 3.2 Change in Problem Importance

		Percentage Naming Problem as One of Country's Most Serious		
Experiment	*Problem*	*Before the Experiment*	*After the Experiment*	*Change: Pre- to Post-*
2	Defense	33	53	20
	Inflation	100	100	00
	Pollution	0	14	14
8	Arms control	35	65	30
	Civil rights	0	10	10
	Unemployment	43	71	28
9	Unemployment	50	86	36

Except for inflation, then raging at unheard-of levels, those issues given greater exposure on television news grew substantially in the importance citizens ascribed to them. Indeed, in several experiments, "viewers' priorities were significantly affected by a *single*

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news story." And these influences on priorities were maintained over time.

Suppose, however, that television is tracking what viewers independently consider the most important problems so that the actual causal effect runs from the people to the media and not vice versa. To my satisfaction (though the methods used, as reported in Appendix B, are too complex to be described here), the authors succeed in differentiating what opinion would have been with and without the pattern of television news. Thus actual conditions on energy, from oil imports to oil and energy prices, had no impact on public concern, whereas this concern rose by 1 percent for every seven broadcast news stories. The public's memory, however, appears to be limited, for "when television news focuses on a problem, the public's priorities are altered, and altered again as television news moves on to something new."

Immediately, many common-sense hypotheses qualifying those conclusions come to mind. One of the most obvious—vivid, emotional stories that might touch the heartstrings—have no discernible impact on agenda-setting. Another common-sense observation, by contrast, is important: lead stories matter more; indeed, they matter most, since "virtually all of the change in the public's concern over energy, inflation, and unemployment that is produced by alterations in television coverage can be traced to lead story coverage."

It is not so easy to guess how personal experience affects the perceived importance of issues. On the one hand, the connection sometimes seems to be notable for its absence. Unemployment, the Vietnam War, and the energy crisis, for instance, did not generate more concern among those personally affected. On the other hand, one of Iyengar and Kinder's experiments reveals that black people rate civil rights far higher than do whites, and that the elderly rate social security higher than do others. When news first appears it engenders more interest among those who consider themselves personally affected, but if network coverage continues, those who do not yet see the importance of the problem begin to do so.

A second important finding involves priming: "*By calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged.*" Two possible directions of causality have to be distinguished: Do people *project* their feelings about presidential performance onto specific issues, or do their appraisals of how well presidents do on particular matters condition or *prime* the public's appraisal? As the authors explain:

> The political differences between priming and projection are enormous. If priming holds, then television news possesses the capacity to alter the standards by which a president is judged, and therefore the degree of public popularity a president enjoys and the power he can wield. If projection holds . . . that implies a sharply reduced role for television news as a molder of opinion.

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Iyengar and Kinder demonstrate that while projection and priming both exist, priming predominates: increases in news coverage alone more than double the importance of an issue in determining presidential performance ratings. It follows, empirically as well as conceptually, that the more the media attribute responsibility for events to presidents, the more citizens evaluate their performance by that criterion.

Perhaps it is not only the media but also the audience that matters. People who are politically active, it turns out, are better able to resist agenda-setting than are their opposites but, by the same tests, the politically involved are equally subject to political priming. Political groupies carry with them more of their own policy agenda, but their evaluations of political objects are still primed by the media.

THE ONLY WEAK CHAPTER in this pathbreaking book is the final one, on the implications of the authors' findings for democratic politics. Instead of suspecting that the literature on media bias was as badly in need of correction as they had proved the literature on the influence of television news to be, they adopt the congratulatory tone of media defense: the major media are deeply committed to objectivity, a commitment reinforced by professional routines and a norm of nonpartisanship. Reporters share the values of other Americans and are not opposed to existing authority. This, I think, is surely wrong. Rather than pursue these differences, which would take us outside the purview of this major book, I would like to indicate further its potential significance.

Under what conditions would there be reason for concern about the political power of the major media? A two-by-two matrix (Figure I) captures the key considerations. At stage one, we find the previous conventional wisdom: if both media influence and media bias are weak, then concern about the subject is trivial. And while media bias by itself might be dangerous, efforts to exert power (stage two) would be futile.

Figure I: Stages of Media Power

Media Bias	*Media Influence: Weak*	*Media Influence: Strong*
Weak	(1) Trivial	(3) Potential
Strong	(2) Futile	(4) Troublesome

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Iyengar and Kinder have now taken us to stage three, where media influence is strong but its bias is weak. There is potential but not yet actual power over elections or policies. Were this power to be realized, by being connected to systematic bias, the results would be troublesome (stage four). Read the author's conclusions: "Our results suggest that by priming some considerations and ignoring others, television news can shift the grounds on which campaigns are contested. Priming may therefore determine who takes office—and with what mandate—and who is sent home. . . . Less clear . . . is whether this influence is necessarily undesirable." If creative research like theirs demonstrates, as I believe it will, that we are actually at stage four, where strong media influence is matched by strong bias, their query about desirability answers itself. Soon enough it will become apparent that we have reached the troublesome stage, where media influence has to confront the fact of media bias.

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Symbiosis of Church and State

WILLIAM McGURN

Richard John Neuhaus: **The Catholic Moment: The Paradox of the Church in the Postmodern World.** *Harper & Row. 292 pp. $19.95.*

IN THE CRYPT of the University of Notre Dame's Sacred Heart Cathedral, under a marble slab in the center aisle, lie the remains of one of America's most formidable Catholic intellectuals. More than a hundred years of student footsteps on their way to communion have not yet erased the epitaph. Translated from the Latin it reads: "Here lies Orestes A. Brownson, who came humbly to the recognition of the true faith and devoted his entire life to the valiant defense, by voice and pen, of Church and country." Part of the Transcendentalist movement that included Emerson and Thoreau, Brownson would upon his conversion to Catholicism devote a lifetime to pressing the special affinity between that ancient faith and the youthful American republic.

To the present generation of Americans the idea of devoting one's life to the defense of Church and country is arguably as unintelligible as the Latin in which it is written. At the same time the erosion of a specifically "American" character that once seemed to exclude Catholics (not to mention Jews and other non-Anglo-Saxon

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minorities) has spawned a bitter civil war between fundamentalist Protestants and equally uncompromising secularists for the soul of the American republic. It is a war that has left American Catholics in particular divided and confused, unable to look to an increasingly marginal hierarchy for guidance. Yet it is precisely at this moment, says Lutheran pastor Richard John Neuhaus, that the Roman Catholic Church is poised to lead a renewal of America's liberal democratic experiment.

This at least is the central thesis of Neuhaus's book, *The Catholic Moment*, and at first blush it might appear akin to proposing that Jewish dietary law become the new criterion for awarding Michelin stars. The author further emboldens his claim with his insistence that the way to bring about such a renewal is for the Church to re-emphasize the faith, not dilute it. Catholic social thought, he says, has far more to offer than the catechism of political policies its clergy now seems bent on providing; it can provide "a religiously informed public philosophy for the American experiment in ordered liberty." In short, Catholicism could be the catalyst for refurbishing an American pluralism that is something more than a whorish indifference to standards.

CERTAINLY whorish indifference was not what the Founding Fathers had in mind in 1776. These were men who spoke forthrightly: "we hold these truths to be self-evident." They wrote, moreover, that men were "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," rights that were prior to the rights of citizenship, rights that belonged to another order, and they proceeded to list just what these rights were. Although it is fashionable to dismiss such references as mere conformance to the literary convention of the time, there is no reason not to take these men at their word. Theirs are writings that were debated, haggled over, edited, and haggled over again, and not much is likely to have slipped through without conscious deliberation.

It is a measure of our public incoherence today that there is so little understanding, let alone debate, about the tradition to which our Founding Fathers appealed and their own passionate disagreements about its implications. When they wrote, for example, that the truths they presented were "self-evident," they did not mean immediately obvious. What they meant was that there exist certain ultimate purposes and general truths about man, which can be discerned by careful reflection and experience. Thus they believed that reasonable men would reach roughly the same conclusions, and with this "decent respect to the opinions of mankind" they addressed their declaration not only to George III but also to the world.

In his last book, *The Naked Public Square*, Neuhaus argued that the "sense of transcendent meaning" that so animated the Founding Fathers' writings and sustained their nation has been lost. *The Catholic Moment* takes up that problem, suggesting that this same

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meaning is still carried by the Catholic Church, which by circumstance and disposition is now best placed to help restore it. On the one hand, there is the Church's tradition of natural law, a much misunderstood teaching that recognizes, as Neuhaus puts it, that "Christians have no monopoly on the wisdom appropriate to the political sphere." On the other hand, there is the impetus that comes from the renewed theological focus John Paul II and Josef Cardinal Ratzinger are putting on freedom, an emphasis that insists on some space for the person over and above the claims of any state (or, indeed, of any church). Together, the philosophical and religious tracks can help redefine the terms of a Church whose mission is to live in the world yet not be of it.

To those familiar with the origins of the American polity, the suggestion that it exhibits a distinctively Catholic flavor might be hard to swallow. The Founding Fathers, with a notable exception, were far from Catholic, and insofar as their writings display any attention to Catholicism, they tend to reflect John Adams's assessment that it was characterized by "everything which can charm and bewilder the simple and ignorant." Nor did late eighteenth-century Catholic nations stand out as models of liberal democracy.

Nevertheless, classic Catholic social teaching is a good deal more liberal than it is given credit for, as well as a good deal more progressive than the actual practice of "Catholic" nations. In fact, in one respect it is more liberal than outright secularism, for whereas Catholic social theory readily concedes that it can learn from the secular—Caesar has his own wisdom, as well as his rights—secularists often assume they have nothing to learn from religion. The bridge between religion and secularism, as Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray pointed out three decades ago, is natural law: those general truths about man open to all men, not based on private revelation. In this broad tradition a doctor of the Church, Thomas Aquinas, could find truth in the pagan Aristotle. And in this broad tradition an American political theorist, Thomas Jefferson, could address to the world his justification of the colonial rebellion against the Crown.

Upon reflection one realizes that a political order claiming to be based on "the laws of nature and of nature's God" is a theme as congenial to Catholicism as it was to Jefferson. This is why American Catholics have (at least until recently) given such firm support to what Murray called "the American proposition," despite the Know Nothings, the Ku Klux Klan, the convent burnings, and the more insidious intellectual currents that still bedevil American Catholics today. Catholics' ability to separate the political from the religious order, Tocqueville noted, made them "the most republican and the most democratic class in the United States." When the Founders debated the form their new republic was to take, they spoke in a language long familiar to Catholicism. Today, says Neuhaus, the

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Church can return this gift by reacquainting America with its own almost forgotten tongue.

SUCH A PROJECT, of course, is not without its obstacles. As Pastor Neuhaus admits, anyone glancing at the state of Catholicism in America today might wonder whether the Church itself doesn't stand in some need of brushing up on this language. The era of the layman envisioned by the Second Vatican Council has in fact given way to a clerical intrusion into all aspects of lay life, with priests, brothers, and nuns organizing themselves politically as a sort of vanguard of conscience—a framework that is more reactionary than its proponents realize. "Whether the regime in question is Franco Spain or Sandinista Nicaragua," Neuhaus points out, "the formal relationship is the same, and that relationship is one of monism." More and more the Catholic clergy has come to adopt the literalist approach of many American Protestant sects in the direct adaptation of Scripture to complex political dilemmas. Consequently, those who disagree with some of the conclusions are seen as "somehow deficient in conscience." This also helps explain why religious writing today is so full of invective.

For Neuhaus the key both to overcoming this moral hubris and to providing a genuine role for religion in society is first to get priorities straight. This, for the Church, means the primacy of the Gospel: "the political is urgent," says Neuhaus, "but it is not ultimate." This is not merely theological gloss on an otherwise political work: of *The Catholic Moment's* six chapters, the first four deal with Catholicism—the changes brought about by Vatican II, the Pope's post-modern message, and the moves toward unity with other Christian faiths. Only in the fourth chapter does he turn to liberation theology, and not until the fifth and sixth chapters does he specifically address the implications of Catholic social thought for the American political order. Although he believes that John Paul and Cardinal Ratzinger have made progress and are putting the faithful on the right track, he suggests that Vatican social teaching would be helped by a greater familiarity with capitalism and democracy as manifested in the actual record of America, instead of the abstract generalizations drawn from nineteenth-century writings.

The other obstacle, which Neuhaus does not address, has to do with the experience of America as a Protestant republic. Put simply, there is probably too much latent anti-Catholicism for America to take a Catholic-led renewal seriously, whatever the philosophical congruence in social thought. This is not to lessen the imperative that the Church take up the task Neuhaus has outlined here. But it is to suggest that even if the Catholic Church in America is successful in this endeavor, it will probably find the outcome expropriated by others, and expressed in a Protestant tone that is more in line with American history. To see Protestants learning from Catholicism would probably please Neuhaus. It would also have warmed

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even the flinty Yankee heart of Orestes Brownson, who argued that American Catholics could learn something from Protestants, too.

What is important, however, is not who gets credit for the undertaking, but that it is undertaken. The ultimate significance of a successful effort, moreover, may lie far beyond the borders of the U.S., in the developing nations of Africa and Latin America, where even now the Church is shaping the struggle for a political and moral identity. A Catholic Church that proved it had something to teach a Protestant America would be in an even stronger position to influence nations that are already favorably disposed to listening. The evidence in *The Catholic Moment* is that the opportunity has arrived. What is sad is that even Neuhaus is not convinced the Church will take advantage of it.

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The Immunosuppressed Body Politic

STEPHEN CRYSTAL

***Randy Shilts:* And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic.** *St. Martin's Press. 630 pp. $24.95.*

THERE IS plenty of blame to go around in Randy Shilts's angry chronicle of the first five years of the AIDS epidemic. Hardly anyone comes off well: most players in the drama are characterized as myopic and self-involved, more occupied with their own immediate interests than with controlling a scourge whose deadly scope they refused to acknowledge. Concerned with defending their sexual freedom, leaders of the homosexual community initially denied the need for a change in behavior and focused on resisting bathhouse closings, while local health officers, concerned with placating political constituencies, failed to take decisive action. Taking a hard line on the budget and slow to give priority to a "gay plague," the Reagan administration resisted allocation of research funding year after year, sending senior health officials to testify that no more funds could be usefully spent, while those same officials were writing anxious memoranda on unmet budgetary needs. Concerned with their costs of operation, the blood-banking industry opposed screening the blood supply long after the danger was apparent and the first screening methods were available. Concerned with scientific precedence, fame, and the Nobel Prize derby, medical researchers feuded, with the famed Dr. Robert Gallo of the National Institutes

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of Health (NIH) reportedly attempting to obstruct other federal research such as that at the Centers for Disease Control. (Quoting several U.S. researchers, Shilts also asserts that Gallo's viral isolate was "too identical" to the French strain to have been independently isolated, suggesting that it may instead have been "stolen" from the French.)

In anger and denial, patients like Gaetan Dugas, the flight steward who, as "patient zero," was the source of infection for dozens of the first American cases, continued to infect other victims. Meanwhile, members of big-city homosexual communities who did not have symptoms of the disease refused to acknowledge the dangers of promiscuous and unprotected sex until many of their friends had died. As we now know, in some of the largest of these communities, dramatic changes in risky sexual practices did not take place until the rate of seropositivity—that is, infection with the virus—had reached as high as 50 percent. Not until Rock Hudson's death gave a familiar face to the epidemic's victims—after 6,000 less famous Americans had already died—did the media and general public really begin to pay attention. Major research funding was inexcusably delayed until well after it was clear that the epidemic would reach disastrous proportions. Each for his own reasons, those who needed to act failed to do so. Shilts's story unfolds with the relentlessness of a Greek tragedy, the fatal flaw being denial.

A HOMOSEXUAL, Shilts has undoubtedly been accused of treachery by many friends as a result of his attack on the homosexual community's initial response to the epidemic. But he is even-handed in his distribution of blame, offending all parties equally. His cry of outrage provokes much thought about our society's ability to respond to emergent social problems that touch on controversial issues of personal behavior—raising questions that become all the more acute as the epidemic moves into its next phase, in which it is ever more intimately associated with seemingly insoluble societal difficulties of long standing, including intravenous drug use and the social problems of the underclass.

The book is an outgrowth of Shilts's years of covering the AIDS beat for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. As such, while covering the issue nationally, it focuses primarily on the events surrounding the spread of the epidemic in the homosexual community there. We learn much less about the relation between AIDS and drug abuse, which has played a larger role on the East Coast than in California, and which is increasingly coming to the fore across the country in the epidemic's second stage.

Longitudinal studies of homosexual men now show sharp reductions in high-risk practices and a corresponding plateau in the rate of seroconversion. No such change is observable among intravenous drug users, however, whom it is infinitely more difficult to persuade to heed health warnings. Spread of infection among addicts through

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needle sharing, secondary spread from addicts to their sexual partners, and the birth of HIV-infected babies born to infected women are all highly prevalent, accounting for increasing percentages of AIDS cases. In some populations of drug users, as in some populations of homosexual men, one person in two is already infected. Perhaps most ominous are the initial results from recent large-scale blind testing of blood samples in inner-city areas. Among newborn infants in New York City in late 1987, 1.64 percent, or one in sixty-one, had the antibody for the HIV virus. (Perhaps 40 percent of these can be expected to acquire AIDS itself.) Early in 1988, an unpublished study at a major hospital in Newark found that 5 percent of newborn infants were seropositive. Most current infection in women and children in the United States is associated with intravenous drug abuse.

Shilts's recounting of the initial years of the epidemic dramatically communicates the power of denial and the concomitant difficulty in changing health-risk behavior—even in communities in which the risk was imminent and the population was predominantly white and not economically or educationally underprivileged. As attention shifts from AIDS among homosexuals to drug-related infection, changing risky behavior will be even more difficult. As for non-drug-using heterosexuals, despite the barrage of media attention given to AIDS, the warnings do not seem to be leading to any massive change in behavior. Indeed, while dropping for homosexuals, the incidence of syphilis among heterosexuals climbed during 1987, an indication that high-risk practices continue. And while there is still no sign of a large-scale breakout of infection beyond the main risk groups, this may be due more to luck than to good planning. We have blood-supply testing, media visibility, and, belatedly, significant funding for biological research on AIDS, but the societal response to the special problems of the epidemic's second phase reflects a new set of failures of will.

CONTEMPLATING the problem that still lies before us, a discouraged and beleaguered public-health official might be tempted to imagine a diabolical intelligence on the part of the HIV virus, craftily attacking not only biological but also societal points of vulnerability, and paralyzing both the immune system and the body politic. Public-policy issues involving sexuality touch on areas of profound social disagreement, which has produced a stalemate on such problems as teenage pregnancy and abortion. Issues of sexuality are matched in their apparent irresolvability only by the drug problem, which seems to be more firmly entrenched than ever in our society, with sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll replacing the wine, women, and song of a more innocent day.

The policy dilemma over teenage pregnancy epitomizes the political difficulty of resolving public issues involving sexuality. Two strongly-held points of view, rooted in differing value systems,

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are in conflict. The instrumentalist or "pragmatic" public-health approach focuses on the technology of contraception. The moralist or "abstinence" approach, in contrast, sees continence as the only appropriate policy, individually and societally, and resists technological fixes, which implicitly condone the problematic behavior. In the policy stalemate, neither side prevails, since the United States is neither like China (which imposes tight social control over personal behavior) nor like Sweden (where sexual activity among teenagers is taken for granted, premeditation in teenage sex is casually accepted, and contraception is routinely available in school health clinics). The result is that America's illegitimate pregnancy rate for teenagers is the highest among Western countries. Since the same behavior that produces teenage pregnancy can produce AIDS (with inner-city youth being at high risk in both cases), since use of any form of contraception is low among such teens, and since a substantial reservoir of drug-related infection now exists in the inner city, continued spread among inner-city youth appears almost inevitable.

The high level of societal discomfort in dealing with issues of sexuality is manifest in Shilts's account of the conflict and lack of resolution concerning such issues as bathhouse closings, promotion of condom use, and explicit "safe-sex" educational campaigns. Similar controversies involving "pragmatic" versus "moralistic" philosophies have recurred in venereal-disease-control policies for many decades, never really being resolved.

Still more difficult conflicts characterize the epidemic's second phase. While the regulation of sexual behavior is socially difficult, dealing with hard-drug abuse has been nearly impossible. Here the conflict between "pragmatists" and "moralists" has taken the form of debates over expansion of methadone treatment and the distribution of free needles. Methadone has always been the focus of bitter controversy, seen by the "abstinence-minded" as merely substituting one addiction for another. (Black leaders, like Harlem Congressman Charles Rangel, are among the harshest opponents.) This controversy, combined with the NIMBY ("not in my backyard") syndrome that delays the opening of clinics, has led to a shortage of supply that has persisted, even while AIDS continues to spread through needle sharing. Thus, heroin addicts willing and even eager to go into treatment remain on waiting lists for months—as infection rates among addicts increase by 5 percent a year or more, infection spreads from city to city, and ever more non-addicts are infected through sexual contact with addicts.

Massive expansion of drug treatment sites would require large amounts of money and political will—commodities conspicuously absent during the first stage of the epidemic, as described by Shilts, and still absent to a considerable degree. Another "pragmatic" public-health alternative—programs for the distribution of clean needles—has largely proved unacceptable to the abstinence-minded, despite the recent announcement of a small experimental program

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in New York. Even less controversial programs—such as proselytizing for cleaning needles with bleach—have been limited in scope in much of the country. Nor does aggressive law enforcement, at the borders or in the cities, appear to be able to stem the problem. Fantasies of scarlet-letter-"A" tattoos or quarantine contribute little but paranoia to the atmosphere.

As the stalemate continues, people die. The Chinese model for successfully solving problems like drug abuse, prostitution, and overpopulation—aggressive, neighborhood-based social control—has little relevance. Lurking not very deep below the current neglect of the epidemic with regard to drug abusers and their sexual contacts lies the unspoken thought: "These junkies will be no great loss, anyway." But, of course, as Shilts's story dramatizes, no group is an epidemiological island.

SHILTS'S JOURNAL of the plague years is a tale of delay, denial, and failure of political and cultural leadership. His indictments are harsh but generally reinforced with considerable detail; they reflect an impressive amount of journalistic shoeleather. San Francisco in the early 1980s was a city in a state of shock, and his tone, full of passionate intensity, reflects this. His debunking of the claim that the U.S. medical research establishment swung into battle with all guns blazing to quickly isolate the virus is persuasive. U.S. research was delayed for years by shoestring budgets, and researchers at Paris's Institut Pasteur seem to deserve the credit for isolating the virus. (Shilts dismisses a U.S.-French agreement to deem Robert Gallo and Pasteur's Dr. Luc Montagnier co-discoverers as "a pleasant fiction.") Until quite recently, U.S. AIDS research accounted for a tiny fraction of the vast NIH budget. Shilts is perhaps hardest on homosexual politicos who felt their community was being pushed back into the closet just when they had gotten out, and who labeled the Cassandras calling for behavior change "sexual fascists." His case is cogently stated and his passion, under the circumstances, entirely understandable.

Shilts recites a litany of missed opportunities—protecting the blood supply earlier, closing the bathhouses earlier, launching research earlier, educating the public earlier. National political leadership was conspicuously lacking. Only amid carnage in big-city homosexual communities, with as high a proportion infected among some groups as during the Black Plague of the fourteenth century, did the necessary radical changes in personal behavior take place. But the spectacle of missed opportunities amid ever-spreading infection continues (in somewhat different form), and much of the heterosexual population—including many of those most at risk—has not yet taken steps to reduce the danger.

The stalemate that currently prevails in the attempt to stem drug-related infection—as well as the continuing risk of broader spread—calls out for national leadership, but the body politic seems

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to remain immunosuppressed. The issue did not even make it into the President's last State of the Union message. Many further measures are urgently needed; massive expansion of drug treatment, intensive parole and probation supervision with regular drug testing, and an extensive educational campaign are only a few of the steps required. Perhaps the most difficult question is whether the risk of AIDS will become an immediate concern of the general public, and will induce the required behavioral changes, before the virus becomes entrenched in new populations.

Shilts's style of exposition can be irritating: he hops back and forth between strands of the story, so keeping track of some of the minor characters can be difficult. Using a journalistic approach, Shilts builds his case by accumulating incidents and anecdotes; these are often fascinating, but the account sometimes bogs down in unnecessary detail. These are minor quibbles, however. His book is the best yet on the public-health crisis of the century, with important lessons for the epidemic's current stage.

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An Academy of One's Own

JOSEPH ADELSON

Jill K. Conway, Susan C. Bourque, and Joan W. Scott, eds.: **"Learning About Women: Gender, Politics, and Power."** Daedalus. *Vol. 116, No. 4 (Fall 1987). 210 pp. $5.00.*

THIS IS NOT *Daedalus* at its best. The memorable issues are those with a strong central theme, or those inspired by fresh ideas. Neither condition is met here. The topic of "women" amounts to a catchall; the subtitle "Gender, Politics, and Power" is incantatory rather than descriptive. The essays share little aside from like-mindedness; hence the issue wanders somewhat aimlessly—a piece on pedagogy, another on citizenship, two on feminist science, one on the history of women historians, one on economic development, and so on. Smack in the middle is a study of Australian war memorials, which, whatever its merits as art history, has only a marginal relationship to the other articles.

As to freshness, there is some new historical information now and again, but on the whole, the analysis and interpretation are conventional, the "feminist theory" incessantly adverted to having

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become commonplace. Several of the essays are rehashes of material published previously. This collection offers a revealing contrast to the first *Daedalus* issue on women, in 1964, to which the historian (and feminist cheerleader) Carl Degler devotes an afterword. That volume was indeed fresh, appearing at the very beginning of today's "movement," but its virtues went beyond novelty. Its distinguished authors—David Riesman and Erik Erikson, among others—were deeply interested in the lives, prospects, and problems of women as such. Little of that interest is seen here, actual women having been replaced by Woman, and even more so by Gender, and by Gender Ideology, a term employed without irony or embarrassment. What we see here is another example of the flight from the person to the social system characteristic of post-War social science. Psychology is ignored, biology is treated with genuine horror; both are replaced by an overblown, portentous macro-sociology.

We learn little about women, but we learn a great deal about doctrinaire feminism. We learn, not surprisingly, that a single-minded attention to gender produces little insight but rather a consistent distortion of the obvious. Elizabeth Holtzman, who is interviewed in the issue, argues that Geraldine Ferraro's problems had to do with women's being "held to a higher standard" than men in politics. In fact Ferraro was widely felt to have been held to a lower standard —chosen for gender though underqualified, glib and superficial, lacking in *gravitas*, and very much like Joseph Biden (and unlike Jeane Kirkpatrick). A second interviewee, Shirley Williams, a leader of Britain's Social Democratic Party, tells us that Mr. Zaccaro's problems were due to his being a woman politician's husband, making no mention of the widespread suspicion about underworld connections. Holtzman is embittered by a fairly innocuous commercial attacking her; she cannot grasp that such commercials are frequent, that our politics are rough and getting rougher, and that white males, as the major players, are the prime targets. Does she really believe that any woman Court nominee would have been treated more viciously than Robert Bork?

THE SENTIMENT of grievance suffuses the issue, even in the face of women's spectacular successes. One article begins by reporting recent gains in professional training: one-third of medical students, one-half of law students, a doubling of this enrollment and a quadrupling of that. Then without missing a beat the authors launch themselves into tendentious counting—only seventeen women out of 154 circuit judges, etc. It is astonishing. Here are professional scholars who cannot recognize that it may take a few years for a 50 percent enrollment in law schools to evolve into a proportionate number of judges, deans, and senior partners; they seem willfully blind to the fact that age differences between and within cohorts are sufficient to account for much or most of the variance in outcome.

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One can understand the persistence of grievance. It rationalizes failure; it sweetens victory; it intimidates; it can win preferment. Above all it provides identity and a career scenario—the talented woman kept from opportunity and just reward by an unjust masculine culture. Putting aside embellishments and fustian, the sentiment of grievance lies at the basis of gender theory, and a moment's thought tells us why it will no longer do; it is wrecked by success.

In many academic fields there will soon be more women than men. The percentage of female graduate students in my department is approaching the two-thirds mark. Some traditionally masculine specialties—e.g., organizational psychology—now have more women students than men. Most new faculty appointments in recent years have been filled by women. These changes are found in other disciplines as well. How can that be? One would not think it possible, given the tenets of gender theory. Why were those insuperable barriers to female achievement so easily overcome? When and how did male tyranny become so otiose, so quickly? Who harpooned the Great White Male? We will not get the answer from feminist theory; nor will we find the question raised, it being the tendency of a failing theory to avoid troubling questions.

THE LIMITATIONS of gender ideology are seen most clearly in its efforts to construct a feminist science. There are two such articles in the issue, along with approving commentary by Degler and by Stephen Graubard, *Daedalus*'s editor. The shared belief is that science itself is masculine, and that this has already been established by the discoveries of gender theory. Degler tells us that women "scientists and historians of science have adroitly exposed its masculine origins and assumptions." Don't believe a word of it.

There is a modest case to be made for the impact of gender on the content of scientific work, to the effect that the scientist is drawn to topics of personal interest. That has been true some of the time in some of the social sciences and—less often—in some of the biological and medical fields. Even so, gender is in no way a reliable guide to interest: consider attachment theory (which focuses on mother-child bonding), most of whose pioneers were or are male—Fairbairn, Winnicott, Bowlby. Still, it would come as no surprise to demonstrate some skewing of interest related to the sex of the investigator.

But the claims of feminist science are far more radical, its thesis being that science is masculine in its essence. First, there is an argument from origins—i.e., that the founders of science were men, who organized its institutions and modes of working along lines congenial to them. Perhaps so, but the same could be said for almost all areas of creative achievement—painting, music, theater, poetry—whose "founders" were male. The second and more central argument is that the intrinsic style of science—its methodologies, epistemologies, modes of testing and proof—is masculine, more natural to

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men and their presumably inherent ways of thinking and being. Hence a woman choosing science chooses an alien mode of cognition. It is argued that there is an alternate, feminine mode of science, governed by different kinds of reasoning and interpretation. Then we learn that it does not yet exist, it is all possibility, or promises. Here is Elizabeth Fox-Keller, at the end of a sincere and tortured examination of this issue, claiming that "the emancipation of science from its 'masculinist' heritage will require a transformation of the very categories male and female and, correspondingly, of mind and nature."

I have no idea what that means.

Even more troubling than its obscurantism is the effort of feminist theory to depict science as just another sectarian enterprise, its truths entirely relative, hence without any claim to universalism. True, the domain of science is narrow, but within self-specified limits its findings are indeed universal: as Isaiah Berlin once wrote, its solutions are "universally, eternally, and immutably" true, for all times and places. The truth or falsity of a finding does not depend on the investigator's personal qualities or his or her "perspective." Findings can be made and confirmed—and disconfirmed—by anyone, without reference to gender, age, religion, race, nationality, sexual orientation, political belief, physical disability (Hawking), or theological eccentricity (Newton). That is the glory of science.

To write loosely, and without evidence, of masculine and feminine science takes us down a perilous path. We know that scientists of Jewish origin have been prominent in the post-War era; there is good reason to believe that they will be succeeded by Asians and Asian-Americans. Are we then to think of Jewish science, and in a few years of Asian science? If not, why not? Why should gender control science more powerfully than other cultural categories?

The essays in this collection display an ironic regression: a movement that begins by protesting that "difference" is artificial and factitious ends by celebrating it, giving little thought to the intellectual consequences.

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Middle Class and Underclass

ROBERT I. LERMAN

Reynolds Farley and Walter R. Allen: The Color Line and the Quality of Life in America. *Russell Sage Foundation. 520 pp. $37.50.*

William Julius Wilson: The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy. *University of Chicago Press. 265 pp. $19.95.*

ARE BLACK AMERICANS gradually becoming part of mainstream society? Or is the nation following the Kerner Commission's prophecy and moving toward separate black and white societies? There are plenty of facts, but not all point in the same direction. During the last twenty-five years, earnings of black men and women rose much faster than those of whites. But black poverty is three times more prevalent than white poverty. We see blacks becoming teachers, reporters, lawyers, judges, and mayors, but we also read about high rates of black crime, illegitimacy, welfare dependency, and drug abuse. In most big cities, people are afraid to venture into poor black neighborhoods or to have their children attend largely black schools.

What do social scientists make of the confusing picture of genuine black economic progress taking place alongside the rise of a black underclass? Little agreement exists among academics, despite thousands of sociological and economic studies and an abundance of data. Until recently, the view of blacks as victims was the dominant one in respectable academic circles. According to this view, blacks have made limited progress and continue to suffer economic hardship because of still pervasive racial discrimination. The cause of their problems, it is held, is the economic and social constraints blacks encounter, not their responses to those constraints. The black urban poor do not constitute an underclass that engages in self-destructive behavior; instead, the poorest families have unusual strengths that permit them to survive in the face of social injustice.

Moderate and conservative scholars agree on a different set of facts: the dramatic economic and social progress of middle- and upper-income blacks, and the tragic breakdown of the inner-city black community. They differ on how to explain these trends. Moderates emphasize the role of social and economic factors, while conservatives argue that the breakdown of constructive middle-class attitudes is the primary culprit.

THESE TWO BOOKS fall broadly into the liberal and moderate camps. Reynolds Farley and Walter Allen present a comprehensive but segmented analysis of black-white differences in popu-

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lation trends, fertility and family structure, location and migration, education, employment, occupational achievement, family income, and earnings. Their book is one of a series promoted by the Russell Sage Foundation and the Social Science Research Council to convert the vast array of data from the 1980 Census into analyses of important trends in American life. Although the book relies heavily on Census data, the authors draw on non-Census sources as well. At its best, the book discusses the historical forces influencing socioeconomic indicators, provides rich detail on black-white differences, examines competing explanations for trends, and develops original new tests of hypotheses.

The disciplined reader can learn a great deal from the sheer volume of data and the sensible way in which it is used. Thus Farley and Allen, relying on age-adjusted trends in death rates by cause, inform us that deaths of black men by murder and accidents declined substantially between 1970 and 1983. Another surprise, derived from 1980 Census data, is that residential segregation was as pronounced among high-income as among low-income black families. A third striking phenomenon is that by 1980, black women had progressed to the point of earning as much as white women, whereas black men still earned only 62 percent of what white men earned. Most of the male earnings gap resulted from differences in education, experience, regional distribution, and work hours.

In a chapter comparing economic and social differences between native-born and foreign-born blacks, Farley and Allen attempt to refute Thomas Sowell's argument that the economic success of West Indian blacks proves that frugality, hard work, and entrepreneurial traditions are more important than race. The Farley-Allen tabulations reveal that in 1980, foreign-born blacks did only slightly better than native-born blacks in terms of education, income, occupation, and family stability. Although these are interesting and important findings, it is not clear that they refute Sowell's argument. If, for example, the difference in results stems from the massive inflow of Haitians between 1970 and 1980, Sowell's argument might retain its validity concerning other West Indian subgroups.

Farley and Allen focus mainly on the question of how much convergence has taken place in economic and social conditions. They find that differences between blacks and whites have narrowed in mortality, fertility, educational attainment, earnings, and occupational status. In other indicators, such as family income, blacks have gained little relative to whites during the last twenty-five years. Most troubling are indicators of a decline among blacks in quality of life since 1960: employment of adult black men declined, and the share of children living with both parents fell dramatically, from 80 to just over 40 percent.

Farley and Allen describe but do not explain the deterioration amid progress (although proof of a broad theory may be too much to ask). A fairer criticism is that the authors place too little emphasis

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on the widening economic and social gaps *within* the black population. The book highlights differences between blacks and whites, when it should have said more about the differences among blacks. Instead of separate analyses of employment, occupation, and earnings, the authors could have examined the overall labor-market performance of various subgroups within the black population. Such a focus might have led the authors to pay more attention to the disastrous effects of violent crime and drug abuse, which have become so commonplace in urban black communities. It is hard to understand how a book on the quality of life of American blacks can regard these as minor issues.

WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON confronts the problem head-on. He bluntly documents the catastrophic and fundamentally novel situation in urban black areas. During the 1940s and 1950s, even in Harlem, "there was crime . . . , but it had not reached the point where people were fearful of walking the streets at night, despite the overwhelming poverty in the area." Wilson is not afraid to use the phrase "tangle of pathology" in describing the crime, out-of-wedlock teenage childbearing, and welfare dependency in black urban areas. In fact, in his first chapter, he chides liberals for denying the rise of a black urban underclass. Traditionally, liberals have believed that those pointing out socially destructive behavior by blacks were "blaming the victim"; that the family disruption and widespread illegitimacy of ghetto blacks represented resilient, adaptive behavior; that if rampant criminality and drug abuse took place, the cause was racism. These positions, and the ferocity of the attacks on Daniel P. Moynihan for his report on the black family, made liberals reluctant to study underclass issues, leaving the field to conservatives alone.

According to Wilson, conservatives are right to bring out the reality of, and destruction wrought by, the black urban underclass, but wrong to blame liberal social policies for creating the problem. In the first part of his book, Wilson develops an alternative explanation, which goes beyond the reactive position liberals had formerly taken as a result of stigmatization that limited serious scholarship.

Wilson's argument and evidence are interesting and complex, but are not so coherently presented as one might have hoped (perhaps because the book is largely a series of related essays, some previously published). Wilson disposes of racism as the primary factor in the persistence of a black underclass by pointing out that the economic position of poor urban blacks deteriorated when sweeping antidiscrimination programs were implemented, and when the black middle class was making rapid progress.

If not racism, what did create and sustain the underclass? Wilson's story begins with the labor market. During the 1970s, when the supply of low-skilled urban black workers increased (as an indirect result of the waves of migration and baby boom of the 1950s), the

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pool of jobs for inner-city, low-skilled workers was declining and creating high unemployment. At the same time, well-educated blacks found good jobs because of the expanding demand for middle- and high-skilled workers, and because civil-rights legislation reduced discrimination and promoted affirmative action. As educated blacks obtained the means to enter the middle class, they left the urban ghetto areas, leaving behind a community made up mostly of poor blacks. The high concentrations of poor blacks created the conditions for a self-perpetuating underclass. Young people no longer had links to a job network or expectations that education would provide the key to a middle-class income and life-style. Instead, they turned to welfare and the underground economy. Given the scarcity of employed black men, young women found fewer suitable partners for marriage, which made childbirth out of wedlock more acceptable to them. The families of these women provided a new base of poor fatherless children, who grew up in communities that lacked both conections to jobs and a middle-class leadership to fight against crime and disruption in the schools.

Wilson's explanation is persuasive, but it is also surprisingly similar to the conservative view. For conservatives, the crucial ingredient is the role of attitudes in shaping the initial responses of blacks to social and economic conditions. The conservative argument would run as follows: When the labor market worsened for unskilled workers in inner-city communities, why didn't blacks simply make the best of the situation by accepting low-wage jobs or commuting longer distances? When crime became widespread in black communities, harming the prospects of a local black service sector, why didn't black leaders focus on expanded law enforcement and neighborhood patrols? When young black women saw that they might not find a suitable mate by their mid-twenties, why didn't they delay having children out of wedlock until they were sure that they could not marry a man with a stable job?

Notwithstanding Wilson's differences with conservatives on whether labor-market shifts, changes in black expectations, or a combination of the two factors were *originally* responsible for the growth of an underclass, Wilson's analysis of the *current* situation assigns a large role to attitudes. He claims that inner-city life generates behavior associated with "a life of casual work (tardiness and absenteeism)." These norms develop because urban blacks live in neighborhoods in which most families lack a steadily employed breadwinner. Young black women find out-of-wedlock childbearing acceptable. For Wilson, it is not a culture of poverty but social isolation that generates these negative norms and responses to economic conditions. Although Wilson admits that cultural traits are relevant to behavior, he argues that social isolation can be reversed through appropriate changes in public policy and improved economic opportunities.

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IN THE SECOND PART of his book, Wilson argues that universal—as opposed to race-specific or income-targeted—policies are most likely to solve the underclass problem. Race-specific policies—whether they call for equal opportunity or for preferential treatment—tend to help the more advantaged members of the minority community, since only they can qualify for preferred positions. Although affirmative-action programs have helped some less advantaged minorities obtain jobs in law enforcement, construction work, and crafts jobs in large companies, "ghetto underclass individuals are severely underrepresented among those who actually benefited from such programs." Income-targeted programs lack long-term political support and have too marginal an impact on the job opportunities of black men.

Wilson's strategy is to implement policies that appeal to the more advantaged groups of all races, but that have an especially large impact on the ghetto underclass. Wilson wants the U.S. to move toward the European model of social policy, whose key elements are full employment and a national labor-market strategy, perhaps involving training programs integrated with the education system (as through apprenticeships). He also favors other broad-based programs, such as child-care credits, assured child-support payments (even if the state collects nothing from the absent father), and family allowances. And despite his criticism of race-specific and income-targeted programs, he wants to maintain these programs as well.

Although I am sympathetic to Wilson's general argument, his discussion does not draw on policy lessons from past American and Western European experience. Further, it fails to deal adequately with two critical questions. First, how will Wilson's proposals have a major impact on the underclass? Wilson goes litttle further than pointing out that improving the job prospects of men will strengthen black families and permit absent fathers to contribute more to the care of their children. Yet will modest improvements in job options be able to compete with the much more lucrative possibilities of the underground economy? Will they persuade gang members to give up attempts to dominate the schools and streets? Research on the experiences of cities with full employment could help answer these questions. So far, we have little ground for optimism.

A second problem is the potential conflict between achieving full employment without inflation and adding universal programs to the existing array of income-tested programs. Wilson does not address the main criticism of universal programs—their high costs. More important, he does not recognize that of the Western European welfare states, only a few small countries have been able to sustain both a full-employment economy and a generous social-welfare system.

One comes away from reading these books with an ambivalence about the present and future condition of American blacks: opti-

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mism from the recognition that millions of blacks, perhaps a majority, are firmly entrenched in the mainstream of American life; but deep concern as to our ability to improve the disastrous situation in poor black neighborhoods.

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Ballots, Blacks, and Bureaucrats

JEREMY RABKIN

***Abigail M. Thernstrom:* Whose Votes Count? Affirmative Action and Minority Voting Rights.** *Harvard University Press. 316 pp. $25.00.*

THE DUST-JACKET blurb salutes this recent study of minority voting rights as a book raising "important questions that deserve to be debated in public." The praise in this description is certainly well deserved. The hope for further public debate is almost certainly unfounded, however. Thernstrom's impressively detailed and thoughtful study does return, over and over again, to some troubling and fundamental questions raised by the contemporary treatment of "voting rights." But the book itself documents the extreme reluctance of almost everyone in public life to confront these questions.

The basic outline of the story is simple—and dismayingly familiar to observers of federal regulatory programs. When first enacted in 1965, the Voting Rights Act reflected a broad national consensus for federal action against a particular, well-defined evil. Over the next two decades, the initial target of federal intervention was systematically eliminated and the scale and intensity of federal control systematically extended. The current level and pattern of control rests on a series of willful misreadings or artful evasions of cautionary language in the statute. The subversion of the statutory scheme partly reflects the activist decisions of particular federal judges, responding to well-organized litigation campaigns. Much of it also reflects a more common pattern in federal policymaking: in practice, many policies simply reflect the will of bureaucrats in the semi-autonomous voting-rights division of the Justice Department —a bureaucracy which, in turn, seems to define its mission according to the desires of its most immediate current constituency.

A program originally aimed at assuring southern black voters unhindered access to the ballot has thus been transformed into an "affirmative-action program," designed to maximize the "effectiveness" of "minority" votes by altering the way votes are counted after they are cast. In contrast to most other federal regulatory programs

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—in contrast even to most other affirmative-action programs—the underlying statute in this area has been repeatedly reconsidered by Congress, because the original Voting Rights Act was passed as a temporary measure, requiring periodic renewal or extension. Not only has the measure been successively renewed; its scope has also been broadened.

PERHAPS THE most interesting parts of Thernstrom's study are the two chapters devoted to the 1982 legislative battle over renewal of the act. Civil-rights groups were eager to have the legislation revised in order to overturn a 1980 Supreme Court ruling that seemed to restrict challenges to electoral arrangements, unless challengers could demonstrate that the prevailing arrangements had been consciously designed to diminish the political influence of black voters. In the House, civil-rights lawyers were so intransigent in their demands for statutory changes that black and Hispanic congressional staffers angrily stalked out of a climactic strategy session, convinced that the lawyers' obstinacy would destroy any chance of building a successful coalition to achieve renewal. But as Thernstrom shows, the civil-rights lawyers judged their political strength correctly: even Representative Henry Hyde, the key Republican strategist in the renewal fight, grudgingly acceded to the maximalist demands of the civil-rights groups. And even in the Republican-controlled Senate, civil-rights advocates managed to depict those who questioned the proposed expansion in the reach of the statute as opponents of the original measure. In the end, almost no one wanted to be thought an opponent of "civil rights."

Final passage of the 1982 extension may have been helped by the insertion of compromise language, disavowing any requirement of proportional representation, while endorsing a melange of easier "tests" for discrimination than the Supreme Court's 1980 "intent" test. In practice, as Thernstrom shows, the qualifying language in the new statute has been ignored by the Justice Department and the lower courts; thus, in the first four years after its enactment, over 90 percent of "voting-rights" challenges to electoral arrangements were upheld by lower courts—and in still more cases, local officials gave in to challenges without even trying to defend themselves. The result has been continuous pressure to maximize the opportunities for the election of "minority" candidates. Where demographic patterns suggest the potential to create solid "minority" wards, localities have been forced to move from at-large to ward-based voting for municipal councils; the Voting Rights Act has been invoked to prevent the expansion of city boundaries in cases where this would dilute the importance of "minority" voting strength within the original city; and state and local officials have been pressured (and in some cases, directed) to redraw electoral districts along lines calculated to maximize the number of districts with a majority of "minority" voters. The more-or-less explicit premise of all this legal

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pressure and constraint seems to be that the only electoral arrangements that can be considered fair or nondiscriminatory are those that encourage the election of the maximum number of "minority" officeholders.

In sum, the Voting Rights Act has degenerated into an affirmative-action program for "minority" politicians. Like most affirmative-action programs, it rests on a disputable set of assumptions about which groups are in need of special assistance. In a districting dispute in New York, for example, the courts held that Hasidic Jews had no claim to protest the dilution of their voting strength under new districting arrangements, because—unlike officially sponsored "minorities," at whose behest the lines were drawn—the Hasidic Jews could be "adequately represented" by "other whites." As with other affirmative-action programs, there are serious questions about whether this special federal help is really helpful to the ostensible beneficiaries—that is, the voters. Some black leaders, as Thernstrom notes, have protested that the "reforms" induced by the Voting Rights Act have actually placed blacks in new political ghettos, where their votes can be ignored, instead of forcing politicians to attend to black constituents as important swing voters throughout the system.

NONETHELESS, as Thernstrom remarks, affirmative action in electoral arrangements has generated much less public controversy than affirmative action in other spheres. This is not surprising. In the first place, despite all the "results-oriented" manipulation involved in the regulation of "voting rights," the system remains less obsessed with racial or ethnic outcomes than many other programs. Even districts with a majority of minority voters sometimes continue to elect white politicians, and neither the courts nor the Justice Department can object to this result. An analogous "affirmative-action" program in employment would simply require employers to hire a fixed proportion of employees from the South Bronx, regardless of whether most of those hired were white.

A more general and perhaps more important reason for the lack of controversy is that the ultimate consequences of electoral manipulation under the Voting Rights Act are not always apparent to voters—or even to scholars. More blacks and Hispanics are elected to public office. But what difference does this make? In the course of this thoroughly researched book, Thernstrom has little to say on this subject. One study she cites suggests that "minority" politicians may be more likely to feed municipal contracts and other benefits to people of the same background. But the ultimate effects of such patronage on minority communities are hard to trace. On the other hand, some evidence in this book suggests that, in general, concentrating minority voters may increase the overall political weight of Republican and conservative voters—which may be one of the reasons, as Thernstrom notes, that the Reagan Justice Department has

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remained aggressively committed to affirmative action in this one field.

When all is said and done, there may be little controversy about affirmative action in this area because it is one where favoritism of one sort or another has always been part of the game. Grotesque gerrymandering—more often for partisan than for racial reasons—is an old political story in this country. In an era when 98 percent of congressional incumbents are routinely reelected, it is hard to see why anyone should worry about the abstract fairness or unfairness of marginal advantages to "minority" politicians. Thernstrom worries that encouraging a system of representation along ethnic lines may exacerbate tendencies toward ethnic and racial polarization in divided communities. Here again, however, the evidence to date remains unclear.

TO THE CREDIT of this book, it continually returns to the question of fairness without insisting that any particular formula can settle the question once and for all. The questions raised by federal voting-rights regulation go back, as Thernstrom emphasizes, not only to the civil-rights battles of the mid-1960s, but also to the Supreme Court's earlier insistence—in a quite different context—that only one-man-one-vote systems for counting votes are consistent with constitutional guarantees of equality. If this proposition is granted, it is only a small step to insist that vote-counting arrangements must be equal or fair in other respects—a step that has quickly been taken. What is fair, however, remains unclear.

The demand for equal representation rests on the premise that the preferences of every voter should be accorded equal weight. There remains the problem that different methods of counting or aggregating preferences may bias outcomes in one direction or another. But there is a greater problem: no political community can afford to weigh all preferences equally—at least not if some of the preferences would threaten justice or the survival of the community. It might help discussion, then, to admit that equality is not our only concern in the design of political institutions. But few people in public life are willing to do so.

For her part, Thernstrom seems to endorse some version of federal regulation that goes beyond assuring equal ballot access to assuring more equitable results for minority voters. She suggests at one point, for example, that the Voting Rights Act is appropriately applied where there are "white doubts about black competence—in short, racism" and where, as a consequence, "minority candidates face obstacles to election that whites do not—obstacles clearly related to past and present racism." She seems to think, that is, that federal regulation should encourage electoral mechanisms that help nullify, or at least counteract, the preferences of white racist voters. This may be a worthy objective. But if so, it is worthy because we regard the preferences of such voters as morally deplorable or politi-

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cally dangerous—not because there is something inherently unfair about permitting a majority of voters to determine outcomes.

If we could acknowledge that the aim of voting-rights regulation is to counteract racism—or to promote ethnic harmony—we might be less distracted by manipulable abstractions about fairness or equality in the counting of votes. We might also be less prone to go hunting for racism where existing systems have not produced evidently racist policies.

As it is, however, the confusion about the aim of voting-rights regulation has left it a prey to well-organized beneficiaries. We should not be surprised that a Washington program to regulate the political process seems to be most preoccupied with protecting politicians.

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Equality and Mobility

LAWRENCE D. BROWN

Robert A. Katzmann: **Institutional Disability: The Saga of Transportation Policy for the Disabled.** *Brookings Institution. 211 pp. $28.95.*

THE CLAIMS of a wide range of "special" groups, and the costs of meeting these claims, are a prominent issue in today's welfare state. Such groups include the elderly and children, AIDS victims and the drug-dependent, the hungry and the homeless, the mentally ill and the physically disabled. Few of their needs can be met adequately by such established welfare-state programs as pensions, health insurance, unemployment compensation, or public assistance.

These needs are legitimate and compelling, but they are also multifaceted, complex, and objects of diverse strategems, each with its enthusiastic advocates. What policymakers should do is seldom obvious, and the costs of mistakes as measured in wasted resources, social perturbation, and lost political legitimacy can be high. Those seeking enlightenment on these problems will find an excellent source in Robert Katzmann's account of transportation policy for the disabled. Examining in close detail the claims of one special group in one policy arena, Katzmann explores the competing strategies, the institutional forces that tilted policy first one way and then another, and the costs that accompanied the benefits achieved.

The saga he unfolds is troubling. In the early 1970s a movement to improve the accessibility of public buildings to the disabled was casually extended to transportation policy by means of an amendment to the 1970 Urban Mass Transportation Act (UMTA) and Sec-

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tion 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973), the latter a "little-noticed" provision that did not even address transportation issues per se. "A few tenacious legislators," writes Katzmann, "achieved their purposes by attaching their proposals, largely free from congressional scrutiny, as tangential amendments to the legislation at hand."

Congress's improvisations left it in doubt whether policies were intended to promote "effective mobility" for the disabled (special efforts such as mini-buses and taxi services that would help them get around) or an "equal-rights" strategy that would make mainstream transit services (such as buses) as fully accessible to as many of the handicapped as possible, whatever the cost in retrofitting and other structural innovations and modifications. Political forces soon favored the latter approach. Legislative staff on the Subcommittee on the Handicapped of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare wrote a report that contended, with more than a little creative license, that the authors of Section 504 expected the executive branch to issue regulations defining its applications to the disabled. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) was eager to extend its mission to this new constituency. Organizations representing the disabled prepared to take to court administrative agencies that were insufficiently expansive in their regulatory interpretations of these new "rights."

The Department of Transportation (DOT), which learned from the transit industry the possible costs and impracticalities of a national quest for "equal access," favored the effective-mobility approach. President Gerald Ford, however, ordered HEW to coordinate the regulatory process for Section 504, and by 1976 the federal government was on the verge of ordering local transit systems enjoying federal aid to achieve equal accessibilty. Four years of confusion followed. David Mathews, Ford's last Secretary of HEW, doubted that Congress really meant to embrace such a costly strategy, and sought instruction from the legislators. Amidst a deafening silence he left the unsigned regulations on the desk of Joseph Califano, his successor in the Carter administration. That administration, urged on by DOT Secretary Brock Adams, a defender of the equal-rights approach, pushed ahead. The transit industry tried to block the rules in court.

BY THE EARLY 1980s the pendulum had swung back: Congress's appropriations committees were asking hard questions about costs; the Reagan administration was reining in new regulatory departures, including expansive readings of Section 504; and the courts were pointing out the meager support for far-reaching regulatory requirements in the legislative record. Rebuffed, the disability groups fell into disagreement over priorities. (As Katzmann astutely remarks, one appeal of the rights-oriented approach is that it allows all claimants to run up the tab, whereas an effective-mobility strategy obliges contesting groups to try to persuade state and local transit au-

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thorities of the superior merits of their particular preferences.) Transit groups were relieved, but uncertain what would happen next. Overall, federal policy had been vacillating and incoherent.

Why? Katzmann rounds up the usual suspects but convincingly exonerates the most notorious. This is not a case of uncontrolled or malfunctioning bureaucracy. The key provisions were not executive but legislative initiatives, authored and promoted by congressional entrepreneurs who stood outside the transportation network. That these legislative provisions became a springboard for rights-oriented regulations is partly attributable to OCR's zeal, but seems mainly to be explained by the creative committee reporting of a legislative staff. DOT maintained a befuddled responsiveness, pulled back and forth by the conflicting demands of the transit industry and OCR coordinators, by disability groups threatening to sue it, and by policy generalists wondering what to do next. Carter's DOT displayed "a top-down approach to policymaking, with operating bureaus playing a clearly subsidiary role." According to Katzmann, this is not a tale of interest-group liberalism. Both the disability groups and transit lobby got into the act mostly after the legislative entrepreneurs had done their work. Nor was judicial imperialism the culprit. The courts that passed on the accessibility regulations were paragons of restraint and discretion, faithful to the legislative record, respectful of the limits of legislative intent, deferential to the agencies' expertise, and sensitive to the need for flexibility in developing local responses to complicated problems.

The real failures in the case, Katzmann shows, were ones of generalist leadership. Ordinarily, one looks to elected officials and their top managerial appointees for the large "steering" decisions about the values government will endorse and the broad strategic choices those decisions imply. In this case, however, generalists failed to acknowledge the choice between the effective-mobility and rights-oriented approaches; in sum, "the institutional processes did not function in ways that contributed to the clarity of thought necessary for coherent policymaking." Congress declined to coordinate its commitees or discipline its entrepreneurial members and creative staffers, who blithely introduced major departures from established policy into the interstices of bills and reports with no notion of, or interest in, the costs of their handiwork. Presidents Ford and Carter gave no clear policy directions to HEW, DOT, or, it seems, their own staffs. The heads of these agencies—including six DOT secretaries and eight UMTA administrators who held office between 1968 and 1980—had no idea what was expected of them. Sometimes they turned in vain to Congress for clarification (as did HEW Secretary Mathews in the waning days of 1976). Sometimes they pressed bravely on with expansive regulatory requirements (as did DOT Secretary Adams in the early Carter years), guided by the doubtful propositions that the law sanctioned them and that technological innovation would make them feasible and cost-effective.

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The former assumption was invalidated by the courts, the latter by the protracted non-development of "Transbus," which Katzmann insightfully reviews. Not until the early 1980s, when the Reagan administration's minimalist approach to regulation (and its centralization of oversight of the regulatory process in the Office of Management and Budget) coincided with Congress's second thoughts and a growing body of cautionary judicial verdicts, did the ambiguity begin to dissipate.

WHAT IS to be done? Katzmann manfully wrestles with this question in the obligatory Brookings concluding chapter full of recommendations and reforms, but he is too subtle and sensible to extend much hope or to pretend that the system will learn to steer a true and steady course in the near future. Congress, he counsels, ought to keep closer tabs on the doings of its members and committees, and deliberate carefully on the laws it passes. Presidents ought to make clear to their agency heads and staffs what they do and do not want done when hard choices arise. Indeed.

As Katzmann recognizes, it will be difficult to dam the powerful political tides that carry along the tempting policymaking opportunities he analyzes. American institutions are not particularly adept at discharging ambitious tasks requiring the definition and refinement of "rights." Such issues pose deep philosophical conundrums, which are not easily resolved in the course of an afternoon's floor debate on omnibus legislative measures before Congress. Any given formulation, however coherent in its own terms, is bound to have diverse and uncertain effects on different groups, including the "special" beneficiary groups that demand or invite the exercise. Katzmann's case study abundantly illustrates these problems, as do, among others, the no less torturous sagas of busing to achieve integrated schools, affirmative action in hiring, "gay" rights, efforts to end discrimination based on gender, and federal attempts to secure the right of handicapped newborns to full medical treatment. (In this last case, the anti-regulatory Reagan administration seized on Section 504 to justify a whopping extension of the federal role into "private" spheres, and in due course was checked by the courts.) Our political culture cannot live comfortably with "separate but equal"; but neither can it be at ease with its opposite, in part because we lack the institutional capacity to define clearly and sensibly what that opposite is.

In U.S. political life it is eternally tempting to do good by conferring "rights" on groups with whose plight we sympathize—especially if the groups are ardent and organized, if one fails to anticipate the full range of duties these new rights will impose on other sectors of society, and if one can invoke a technological fix (like Transbus) that is expected to make difficult tradeoffs unnecessary. Politicians understandably prefer an artful, prolonged ambiguity to "clarity of thought" and yeas and nays that are decisive and there-

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fore divisive—at least until the various and accumulated costs of vacillation grow visible and unacceptably high. Then "the system" may move toward corrections with reasonable speed and considerable good sense, as in the case reviewed here. But by then some damage will have been done.

ALTHOUGH Katzmann's book may not chart the course to a new era of clear thought and institutional coherence, its virtues are many and prominent. His training in both political science and law makes him a first-rate guide to the nuances of the legislative process, agency rulemaking, and judicial reasoning, which he reviews with great sophistication. The book is detailed and thoroughly argued, yet succinct: the trees never obscure the forest. His main policy theme—how U.S. institutions address the claims of "special" groups for new public services or benefits—is of obvious importance. His main political themes—legislative coherence, executive responsibility, judicial capacity—are enduring ones. Best and rarest of all, his meticulous research and artful exposition illuminate the interplay between these political and policy issues.

One wishes that he had been a bit more systematic about outcomes. After a decade of policy assaults and retreats, what *was* the cost-benefit balance in the mid-1980s? For all the vacillation and incoherence, could one not argue that the saga has had (so far at least) a happy ending? The disabled enjoy enhanced effective mobility as a consequence of federal pressure; the system has pulled back from the more extravagant requirements of the "rights" approach. Groups speaking for the disabled are no longer winning extensive regulatory "reforms" that derive from sweeping federal declarations of rights, but they have sharpened their skills in state and local political arenas, which may be better arenas, given the heterogeneity of needs and interests that characterizes the disabled. Perhaps the system has worked.

One wishes, too, that he had addressed the insistent comparative questions his study logically raises. How do other nations treat or fail to treat these issues, and what does cross-national evidence teach us about U.S. political culture and institutions? Comparative allusions to other policy arenas here at home might also have sharpened his arguments: What are the differences and similarities between this case and the politics of rights and access for, say, blacks, "gays," women, fetuses, handicapped newborns, and other such groups that furnish abundant case material for comparative insights into the interplay among groups, agencies, legislators, and courts? On the impressive evidence of this book, Katzmann is ideally suited to extend his single-case saga into a comparative epic.

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